

THE STORY  
OF  
SAMSON





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THE PHOENICIAN SAMSON.

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# THE STORY OF SAMSON

AND

ITS PLACE IN THE RELIGIOUS  
DEVELOPMENT OF MANKIND

BY

PAUL CARUS

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS

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\* After a photograph by Arthur E. Henderson, published in the *Records of the Past*. This colossal statue of Melkarth was found in Cyprus and is now in the Museum at Constantinople.

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## THE PROBLEM OF THE SAMSON STORY.

### INTRODUCTION.

SOME time ago, in connection with Mr. Evans's study of the mythical Napoleon, I made some editorial comments on myth in history, and alluded incidentally to the Biblical legend of Samson as a solar hero. I deemed this theory thoroughly established and was quite astonished to be called to account by Mr. George W. Shaw, one of our readers and contributors, and a good Hebrew scholar to boot, well versed in Bible lore.<sup>1</sup> I must further admit that Mr. Shaw is not isolated in his opinion, for not only Biblical encyclopædias, both German and English, but also the best secular works,<sup>2</sup> such as the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, repudiate the idea that the story of Samson should be a myth. These circumstances made me reconsider my opinion, but after all, I do not feel compelled to make any radical change in my views. Having collected the evidence, I find that the case is very instructive because it throws much light on the religious development of the Bible.

<sup>1</sup> An article of his entitled "The Period of the Exodus" appeared in *The Monist* for April, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> One quotation shall suffice: "Der Versuch Samson als den phönizischen Herakles, den Sonnengott, zu erklären, scheitert an konkreten Einzelheiten und den lokalen und nationalen Motiven der Sage." Brockhaus, *Konversations-Lexikon*, Vol. XIV, p. 991.

Mr. Shaw's challenge is the immediate cause of the present treatise, and I am grateful to him for his protest. I have devoted considerable time to a reconsideration of the problem, but to re-read the story as told in the Bible, to compare doubtful passages with the original Hebrew, to peruse critically and with care what has been written on the subject by my predecessors in this field (especially Roskoff and Steinthal), to make a résumé of the old arguments, to add some new ones which I discovered by the way, and finally to condense and rearrange the entire subject in the present essay, has been a genuine pleasure to me. I only wish that the perusal of it all will be as interesting and instructive to my readers as the writing of it was to me.

The main part of this investigation of the Samson story first appeared in *The Monist* for January, 1907, but the original essay in its present shape in bookform has been amplified not only by quoting the Biblical text in its best and most up-to-date translation, but also by some additional material, among which there may be much that would seem redundant and superfluous to Old Testament specialists and theologians. But let those who criticize me for introducing information concerning the development of Hebrew religion and literature, theophanies, or elementary topics of Greek and Roman mythology, bear in mind that all these matters are by no means generally known, and this little book is meant for the public at large and is addressed to the specialist only in those passages which contain new arguments, as for instance my comparison of Delilah's web to the folklore gossamer stories, and the interpretation of the last song of Samson where he speaks of himself as one-eyed.

I will say at once that Mr. Shaw's position contains a truth which I do not mean to question, and which I had insisted upon from the start. An account which is decked



with mythological arguments should not for that reason be regarded as absolutely unhistorical, for it is quite natural that myth enters into the fabric of history, as I have pointed out in my introduction to Mr. H. R. Evans's book on the Napoleon myth.<sup>3</sup> Yet, if, on the other hand, a myth has crystallized in a definite form and localized in well-known places, we must not jump to the conclusion that its historicity is well established. It is true, as Mr. Shaw remarks, that "thinkers are becoming more anxious to find history in myth," but one reason why our critics are returning to a conservative consideration of traditions after a period of hyper-criticism, is given in the counter-statement, also alluded to by Mr. Shaw, that they "detect myths in history." It is so natural for man to associate things of the same type that the deeds of a hero are told and retold with reminiscences of the mythology of his ideal, his tutelary patron saint, or god, and thus the two stories, fact and fancy, history and myth, are imperceptibly fused until the hero is deified and the historical tale changed into a myth.

The story of Samson is of special interest and perhaps more instructive than any other legend or fairy tale in the Old Testament; but that it is legend and not history must after all be conceded by all exegetists and higher critics, both liberal and orthodox. It seems to me out of the question that there is any one who would believe the story literally, or lay much stress on the Biblical account as inspired by the Holy Ghost. If there be any one left who is naive enough to take the old orthodox standpoint with respect to the Samson story I should, indeed, like to know how he can make his conception of God agree with the lack of dignity and decency displayed in these primitive traditions.

Samson is neither more nor less than Heracles was to the Greeks, or Siegfried to the Germans, Melkarth to the

<sup>3</sup> *The Napoleon Myth*. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1905.

Phœnicians, Izdubar to the Babylonians, etc., but that he should have been in office as a judge or magistrate of Israel is nowhere apparent in the original story. Samson of course is a Hebrew as much as Siegfried is a German and Heracles a Greek. He is the national hero of the tribe of Dan and the legendary features of the story are too palpable to make it probable that there are many theologians now living who, after a reconsideration of the facts, would still defend its historical character.

Nevertheless, I will grant that (in accord with the principle previously enunciated) there is more history in myth than has formerly been assumed, and I am perfectly willing to say that a man by the name of Samson (i. e., Sun-like) may have lived; that he may have been born after the fashion described in the book of Judges (chapter xiii); that he may frequently, on account of various love affairs, have become entangled in brawls with the Philistines; that these events were praised among his countrymen as deeds of valor, and that his adventures finally landed him in prison. It is a little hard to believe that he found honey in the carcass of a lion, and that he died by breaking down two columns of a pagan house, incidentally killing thereby more than a thousand people; but even if miracles be granted, I fail to see how these concessions can change the character of Samson as the hero of a solar myth.

#### ROSKOFF AND STEINTHAL.

The first to devote a special investigation to the legend of Samson was Dr. Gustav Roskoff, professor of Protestant theology at the University of Vienna, who in 1860 published an essay on the Samson legend, its origin, form and significance compared with the Heracles myth,<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> *Die Simsonssage nach ihrer Entstehung, Form und Bedeutung, und der Heracles Mythos.* Leipsic: 1860.

I have found him still quoted as an authority upholding the historical character of the Hebrew hero. He does so indeed, but not without serious limitations. Conservative writers who rely on him usually overlook the fact that Roskoff treats almost every single incident of the narrative as legendary and merely claims that there are "factic moments"<sup>2</sup> in the story. Whenever he discusses details he alludes to them as "impossibilities and incredibilities" which "in legends" are a matter of course, excusing them with such words as (page 67) "The saga does not care for the credibility of the represented events or related items." He accepts Samson's nazirdom, his heroism, and his death as "factic elements," but that is all, so far as I can see; for he says, "The legend (*Sage*) elevates the hero at the cost of details and historical by-work, and the higher he rises the more neglected are the latter" (page 76). Roskoff argues "Legend is a child of the heart (*Gemüth*) and knows no reflection" (page 71); he suggests that the narrator and his hearers were not critical, and thus the legend finds no difficulty in the strange ignorance of Delilah who ought to have known that Samson was a Nazir and ought to have been familiar with the mysterious quality of his hair (page 71). Roskoff goes so far as to concede that the "sidereal relation permeates the entire Samson saga" (p. 110), but he claims that this pagan feature of it "has been overcome by the idea of Yahveh." Roskoff's concessions grant the whole case and so the believers in the historicity of Samson can hardly claim his authority for a denial of the mythical character of the story. The Yahveh idea is to him the saving element which renders the story religious and makes the historicity of some of its moments probable; and yet even this is of a doubtful value, for Roskoff admits that "the spirit of Yahveh comes over Samson and gives him strength to accom-

<sup>2</sup> The original reads: *faktische Momente*, page 39.

plish his deeds not otherwise than Homeric heroes are assisted by the gods" (page 45). Such is the view of a professor of theology who interlards his expositions now and then with pious contemplations!

Prof. H. Steinthal, of the University of Berlin, criticizes Roskoff severely for his theological bias. He blames him especially for calling Samson "the hero of prayer" (p. 70) who prayed to Yahveh and whom Yahveh helped; but Professor Steinthal is unfair in not allowing his predecessor the right to apply the story in his own way. Do not the Greeks of classical antiquity and modern admirers of Greek culture see in Heracles the ideal man, and so why should not Roskoff, a believer in Biblical traditions, idealize the hero of the Jews in a way to suit his personal preferences? Though Steinthal is perhaps more at home in the field of comparative folklore, being one of the founders of this branch of learning, his own essay on Samson scarcely contains much more as to the facts and perhaps not fewer points for criticism than Roskoff's little book.

#### THE PROBLEM OF ORIGINALITY.

It is interesting to see how every specialist is anxious to preserve the originality of the national hero of that civilization with which his sympathies are most closely associated. Wilamowitz Möllendorf, a Greek scholar, (in his *Euripides' Heracles*) protests most indignantly against the idea that Heracles should be considered a Semitic importation. To him Heracles is a Greek hero, and he would not allow the Greek story to be a mere adaptation of an Oriental myth to the Greek genius. And yet, the similarity of the Greek Heracles to the Oriental Izdubar is obvious at first sight.

The difficulty of such controversies lies in the fact that our viewpoint is a matter of purely subjective attitude. The similarity of the national and the solar heroes in all



European and Asiatic countries is undeniable and yet we can not know whether every nation had its own national myth which has been influenced by foreign importations, or whether all of them are derived from one common prehistoric source. Certain it is that a mutual exchange of thought is not uncommon, and further that every nation worked out the figure of its own national hero. However, the fusion of ideas in the formation of heroic types is too perplexing to allow the making of definite statements. In all these stories, the sun-god, the god of thunder-storms, and the national hero are fused together into one personality which is enriched with the features of any divinity that appeals to the popular imagination, while the humanizing of the myth implies as a matter of course the incorporation of actual reminiscences from real life, i. e., historical elements. Accordingly all myths contain details of a personal and local character and so a discussion concerning the historicity and originality of the Heracles, Samson, Izdubar, Siegfried, and other legends becomes irrelevant. Every one of them has become a national hero, representing the type of his home. Thus the personal equation of the several scholars naturally plays an important part, and two men holding exactly the same views, might set forth apparently contradictory theories. So Roskoff maintains the historicity of Samson and the religious character of the story, and yet he concedes its legendary character and kinship to solar legends, not otherwise than Steinthal. On the other hand, not even Steinthal would be prepared to deny that some boisterous Danite by the name of Samson may have existed, and that some of his brawls with the Philistines may be a reminiscence of actual occurrences.

#### THE ROMANCE OF ALEXANDER.

The poet's art consists in rendering vague notions definite, and a good narrator will vividly depict all the details

of his story. Accordingly it is but natural that a myth by being told and retold will be more and more localized, and its hero (originally a god representing the sun, the moon, or the sky, the thunder, or some other agent of natural phenomena) will gradually become a man, extraordinary through his great virtues and exploits, but perfectly human in his sentiments.

This is not all; the myth changes to saga or legend by crystallizing around some historical figure or by being localized in a definite place. The god is conceived as an ideal man, and if an extraordinary man appears who somehow reminds his admirers of the god himself, the stories of the god are told of him and his real life is soon hidden under the exuberance of the mythical tales. On a farm in the prairie woods of Illinois there stood a dead oak completely covered and almost hidden by the rich foliage of vines, and it impressed me as an allegory of the luxurious growth of a myth surrounding some historical nucleus. He who considers the trunk and investigates the bark, says it is an oak, while he who bases his inquiry upon the nature of the leaves declares that it is a vine. Who is right?

*The Romance of Alexander* is a mediæval epic which echoes the impression made by the great conqueror on the people of Asia. It incorporates many adventures of the Babylonian Izdubar epic and so the origin and history of this strange literary document is very instructive and shows how easily history and myth are fused into romance.<sup>1</sup>

The romance of Alexander tells us about his adventures in many strange countries, and of his struggles with wondrous monsters of all descriptions, reminding us of the incidents of the legends of Heracles, Odysseus,

<sup>1</sup> Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alexander-Romans*, Vienna, 1890; and Meissner, *Alexander und Gilgamesch*, Leipzig, 1894.

Æneas and other solar heroes, and the interest in these fantastical narrations continues down into the middle ages. We reproduce here some of the illustrations of a manuscript written and illumined in the thirteenth century, in



VINE-COVERED TREE.

which the history of Alexander of Macedon has been absolutely obliterated by mythological reminiscences incorporated into this romance.

Might not one literary critic rightly say that the Ro-



mance of Alexander is the Izdubar myth told of Alexander, and that it is originally a solar myth, while another would deny this proposition and claim that the hero of the romance is historical though the account is overlaid with mythical ornamentation? What would be the difference between these contradictory theories beyond mere words?



ALEXANDER FIGHTING WITH BEAST-HEADED MEN.

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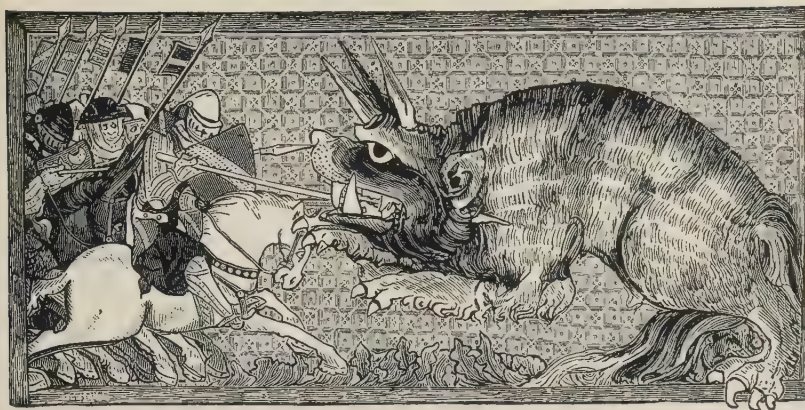
ALEXANDER AND THE MONSTERS.

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Hugo Winckler (*Geschichte Israels*, Vol. II, p. 17) characterizes the Alexander legend as follows:

“The historians whom Alexander the Great took with him, instead of giving an historical description of his deeds,





FANTASTIC REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ADVENTURES OF ALEXANDER  
THE GREAT.

thought their task lay rather in proving that he was the expected redeemer of the old civilization of whom Oriental legend had sketched an enduring picture, and who was to come from the Orient just as the Germans expected the resurrected Barbarossa to restore the glory of their ancient empire. Now at last we are certain that all the Alexander traditions associated with the names of Callisthenes, Cleitarch, Onesicritus, etc., even with that which appears in Curtius, are purely legendary. Their development into 'Romances' of Alexander which go under the name of a Callisthenes (Pseudo-Callisthenes), and the lately accessible knowledge of at least some Babylonian myths, has shown how those tales are a repetition of ancient Oriental legends of which Alexander was later to become the hero solely in order that he might be represented as the expected king who was to usher in a better age.

"In the same way it has come to light that the stories of a certain Ctesias about Semiramis have made use of the same material, and that in general all legends of the classical period up to Roman times, which entered about the most remote antiquity may be traced to the same source."

#### THE LOCALIZATION OF MYTHS.

The Romance of Alexander is not an exception but a typical instance of the historization and localization of a myth. The Nibelung Saga is thoroughly localized on the banks of the Rhine and the Danube, and is connected with actual figures of history such as Attila. The Heracles myth definitely points out the places where Heracles was born and where he accomplished his mighty deeds. The royal families that traced their descent from him were still flourishing in historical times, and the "Pillars of Heracles" are standing to this day. The same is true of all myths and legends, of the Osiris myth in Egypt not less than the anecdotes told of Luther, Frederick the Great, Napoleon

and other modern heroes. Even the fables related of the devil, are localized without any equivocation; the stones he threw, the bridges he built, the walls he piled up are still pointed out, and if the testimony of these actual traces of his activity as *corpora delicti* are accepted as evidence, we can not deny the historicity of the stories.

The historicity of Samson is accepted on no other ground. Dr. Gustav Baur, for instance, sums up his argument in Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums*,—a standard work of German theology, as follows:

“Against the thorough mythization of this Biblical tale speak the definite localities to which Samson's birth, deeds and destinies are attached, and which in any attempt at a mythological solution will remain an insoluble residue, pointing decidedly to a definite historical tradition.”

The *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, the most scholarly and critical theological work of reference in the English language, gives a similar verdict:

“Though the name means ‘solar,’ neither name nor story lends any solid support to Steinthal's idea that the hero is nothing but a solar myth. (Wellhausen, whilst he rejects Steinthal's myth theory, also denies Samson's historical character.) He is a member of an undoubtedly historical family of those Danites who had their standing camp near Zorah, not far from the Philistine border, before they moved north and seized Laish. The family of Manoah has a hereditary sepulchre at Zorah, where Samson was said to lie, and their name continued to be associated with Zorah even after the exile, when it appears that the Manahethites of Zorah were reckoned as Calebites. The name had remained though the race changed (1. Chron. ii. 52-54.).”

We grant the argument, but we grant it as well for Homer's epics. The geographical background of the Odyssey is historical and among the adventurers of the Ho-



meric age there may have been a man who bore the name Odysseus. At any rate, there were plenty of adventurers like him, yet we do not see how the concession refutes the truth that the *Odyssey* reflects the myth of the sun's migration. It is a myth changed into saga, or if you prefer, a saga based upon a mythical motive.

With the same argument we can easily prove the historicity of Münchhausen's adventures, for the family of Münchhausen still prospers in Germany, and the stories contain many allusions to definite historical and geographical conditions.

If we speak of history we ought to mean history pure and simple, unadulterated by mythical elements; and if we ask whether or not the Samson story is historical, taking the word seriously I do not see how any one—scholar or not scholar—can answer in the affirmative.

\* \* \*

Before we begin to deal with the problem of the Samson story itself, we deem it advisable to review in brief outlines the literary traditions and religious tenets of the age.

#### HEBREW LITERATURE AND ITS REDACTORS.

A few words will suffice for a general orientation concerning the successive strata of Jewish literature. We must assume that the historical books of the Hebrews have been derived from two original sources (or classes of sources) of which the one belonged to the kingdom of Judah, or southern Palestine; the other to Ephraim, or central Palestine.

A new epoch in the history of Hebrew literature begins in the year of the great reform, 621 B. C., when the law book was discovered in the temple.<sup>1</sup> The theory that this law book is Deuteronomy has been commonly accepted,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxi-xxii.



at least by all the leading higher critics of Old Testament literature. At the same time it is held that this law book (or Deuteronomy) can not be much older than the year of its discovery in the temple. King Josiah and his reformers did away with the paganism of the temple of Jerusalem, and we know that the Deuteronomic institutions are never alluded to in the previous history of Israel, but that on the contrary in the historical books worship in the high places, and even the use of idols, ephods, teraphim, etc., are frequently referred to as part of the established religion. So we conclude that it was a plot of the reformers to introduce their monotheism into the temple service at Jerusalem, to do away with the worship in high places which had been the ancient form of the religion of Israel. For the sake of giving authority to their innovation they dated the book backward and claimed for it the authority of Moses. This reform movement had been prepared by the prophets in their indignation against the improper features of the traditional religious practices. It took a firm hold on the Jerusalem priesthood who from that day remained faithfully addicted to monotheism, and the authors of this priestly school are commonly called Deuteronomists.

The kingdom of Judea did not exist long after the great reform. King Josiah fell in the battle of Megiddo (609 B. C.) against the Egyptian king Necho. Soon afterwards in the battle of Gargamish (605 B. C.) Judea lost its independence, and all families of importance, the nobility, and all the educated men down to the artisans and especially the smiths, were led into captivity by the victorious Babylonians.

The Babylonian captivity, however, was not the end of the Jewish monotheism. On the contrary it was its true beginning and proved a refining furnace for the Jewish religion. When the Babylonian empire fell into the hands of

the Persians, Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Palestine, and helped them to rebuild their temple at Jerusalem.

The great representative leader of the exiled Jews at Babylon was Ezekiel, who together with his followers, men like Ezra and Nehemiah, cultivated the ancient national traditions, but subjected them to a rigorous criticism in a severely monotheistic, yea a zealotical and narrow, puritan spirit.

The period after the restoration of the temple no longer shows any traces of originality, for the literary work of the post-exilic ages consists mainly in editing and redacting the old books, which are now adapted to this latest phase of a narrow national, but rigorously monotheistic, God-conception.

Our Old Testament scholars accordingly distinguish first in the strata of the historical books of the Old Testament, the two sources of Judaic and Ephraimitic authors (the former abbreviated J, the latter E) which in all probability date back to the ninth century, and may occasionally contain even older documents. They were collected and compiled by authors of the Deuteronomistic schools (commonly abbreviated D) and the work of the Deuteronomist was finally revised by a post-Exilic redactor.<sup>2</sup>

The story of Samson appears to be exclusively Judaic. At any rate it contains no Ephraimitic elements, and there are only a few added glosses of the Deuteronomist and the post-Exilic redactor.

#### THE SUN IN HEBREW LITERATURE.

A Hebrew psalmist, praising the glory of Yahveh, says (xix. 4-6):

<sup>2</sup> Later additions to J and E are designated by J<sup>2</sup> and E<sup>2</sup>, or if they are redactors' glosses RJ and RE. A fusion of Judaic and Ephraimitic writers is indicated by the combination of both letters JE, a redaction of the two sources is marked RJE. The writings of the Priestly Code are sometimes also marked P. C. All these abbreviations are current in modern theological literature and universally understood.

“He has prepared a tent for the sun,  
And thence he comes forth, as, from the bridal chamber,  
the bridegroom,  
And rejoices, like a hero, to run his course.  
From one end of heaven he sets out,  
And to the other holds his winding way,  
And nothing from his fervor can be hid.”<sup>1</sup>

This passage is supposed to be of comparatively late date and yet it is a torso,—a mere fragment which, however, proves that the myth of the sun-god as a lover, a hero and a man of fiery temperament, had not yet been forgotten among the authors of the Hebrew canon. The redactor has preserved this torso on account of Yahveh’s patronage of the sun-hero, but he has omitted the rest on account of its pagan ingredients.

The passage begins abruptly and closes abruptly. If the preceding lines (1-4a) belong to it, there must be a gap in the middle of verse 4. Wellhausen says that “a clause seems to have fallen out which mentioned the antipodean world, the waters of the ocean where the sun spends the night.” The verses 7-14 treat another subject, the praise of the law, not even by way of contrast, and so Wellhausen believes that the psalm has been formed out of two fragments which had no original connection with each other.

It would have been strange indeed if the people of Israel in the period of paganism had not possessed a solar myth; and if they had one, it is probable that in the age of monotheism it would have received a similar treatment to that of the ancient Semitic cosmology which has been rationalized into the simple creation story of the first chapter of Genesis.

The story of Samson in the Old Testament so reminded

<sup>1</sup>-Translated by Wellhausen in the Polychrome Edition. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

the church father Eusebius of the Greek myth of Heracles that, assuming as a matter of course the originality of the revealed Scriptures, he explained Heracles as a pagan imitation of Samson. So much was Eusebius still a pagan himself that he thought nothing of the streak of paganism that pervaded the Samson story. Yet he may be right after all in his general theory that the Greeks are indebted to the Semites (not exactly the Jews) for some essential features of the Heracles myth; for even Preller, long before the discovery of the twelve Izdubar tablets, declared that "some of the twelve labors of Heracles are quite obviously of Oriental origin."

#### THE DATE OF THE SAMSON EPIC.

The Samson account is closely interwoven with references to the Philistines, and this gives us a clue to the date at which the story must have received the final form in which it lay before the post-Exilic priestly redactor. This was about 1100 B. C., and we must assume that it took place shortly after the arrival of these foreign intruders. The reason that we can not date the completion of the Samson epic much later, is based on the fact that the preserved passages contain no allusion whatever to any one of the kings; and we must bear in mind that the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon constitute the most glorious epoch in the history of Israel, which the author certainly would not have left unmentioned if it had been within his knowledge. Though the story of Samson as we have it is the copy of an ancient document it must be understood that it is a fragment only, for, as will be shown further on, the most salient heretical features have been removed in the final redaction.

That the story speaks of Israel's oppression by the Philistines and represents Samson as a saviour of his tribe,

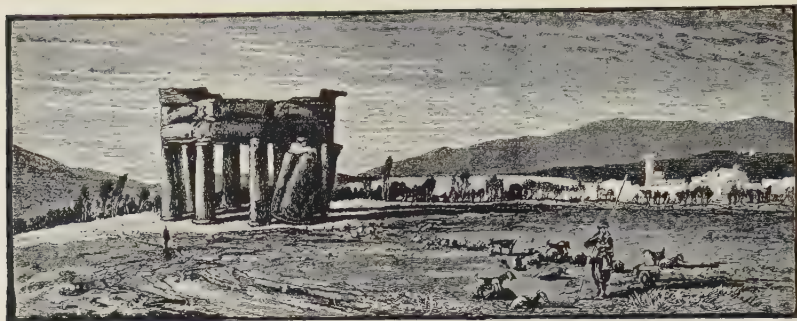


is natural, for every myth is adapted to local conditions when changing into a saga.

In its primitive form the Samson legend is still more ancient as indicated by the story of his marriage. Against the custom prevalent in the time of Hammurabi, the bride remains in the house of her own parents according to the rule of the ancient, and indeed prehistoric, matriarchal institution which was absolutely changed as early as in the time of the patriarchs. This item proves that the nucleus of the story is older than the people of Israel.

\* \* \*

The Samson story has remained a favorite with Bible readers, and so its several incidents have been illustrated by the greatest masters of Christian painting, all of them reflecting the spirit in which the various episodes of the tale were commonly interpreted.



## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

### THE PAGANISM OF DAN.

WE have good reason to believe that in the days preceding the prophetic movement, the people of Israel were pagans as much as the Phoenicians and their other neighbors. As to the tribe of Dan, we have the unequivocal scriptural evidence in chapters xvii-xviii of the Book of Judges which describes the migration of the tribe from the extreme southwest of Palestine to the extreme north, where they founded the city of Dan, the most northern place of Israel. We are told that when they passed through Ephraim they discovered a Levite who was a countryman of theirs, a native of southern Palestine, serving as a priest to Micah, the Ephraimite, and they forced the Levite to steal the Yahveh idol of his master and to accompany the tribe further north to the country of Beth-rehob. The indignation of the redactor vents itself in a gloss on the anarchy of those days, which has been incorporated into the text (xvii. 6), but the original narrator tells the story without finding fault with the paganism involved in it. Professor Moore's opinion is summed up in this paragraph:<sup>1</sup>

"This story is, without question, very old. It relates

<sup>1</sup> Polychrome Edition *Book of Judges*, p. 88.

the origin of the image in the famous sanctuary of Dan without any trace of religious antipathy, and speaks of the *Ephod* with as little prejudice as the original author of Judges, Chapter viii, 27 ff., speaks of that set up by Gideon at Ophrah. The writer evidently enjoys telling of the stroke by which the Danites got possession of it, and of the owner's discomfiture. The picture which he gives of the social and religious state of the times is of the highest value."

Having destroyed the city of Laish and built up a city of their own, called Dan, they put up in it Micah's idol, made of eleven hundred shekels of silver and "it continued there as long as the house of God at Shiloh." The paganism of Dan, in fact also of Ephraim, is here presupposed, and we must assume that conditions were not different in southern Palestine among the Danites in the time when the tale of Samson was composed.

In the Book of Joshua (xix. 47) Laish is called Leshem and it is perhaps the same city which is enumerated in the list of Thotmes III as "Liusa."

We abstain here from entering into a discussion of the story of Dan's conquest of Laish and will only say that Laish<sup>2</sup> means "lion"; and if Dan is an appellative of Shammash, the destruction of Laish may contain a reminiscence of the sun-god's victory over the lion.<sup>3</sup>

It is commonly conceded that the purpose of the tale in its present form is to explain how it happens that there is a city of Dan in the farthest north and a tribe of Dan in

לֵישׁ

<sup>2</sup> Hugo Winckler (*Gesch. Israels*, II, pp. 64-65) translates the name Laish by "does not exist," and Leshem by "no name." He suggests at the same time an identification of Laish with Luz (mentioned in Gen. xxviii. 19; xxxv. 6; xlviii. 3; Joch. xvi. 2; xviii. 13; and Judges i. 22-26), an old name of Bethel, for which he finds the analogous term in the Arabic *laud*, meaning "asylum," and if he is right, it would explain why both cities, Dan and Bethel, containing the two main sanctuaries of ancient Israel, are called Luz, for Luz would not be a name but an appellative to denote a city the temple of which was an acknowledged place of refuge.

the extreme south of Palestine. For all we know the sameness of these names may be an accidental coincidence.

A reminiscence of the tribe of Dan is still preserved in the modern Tel el Kadi, for *Kadi* which means "judge" is nothing but the Arabic translation of the Hebrew *Dan*.

Tel el Kadi is a mere hill of ruins which no longer betrays that it is the site of an ancient city. Close by is one



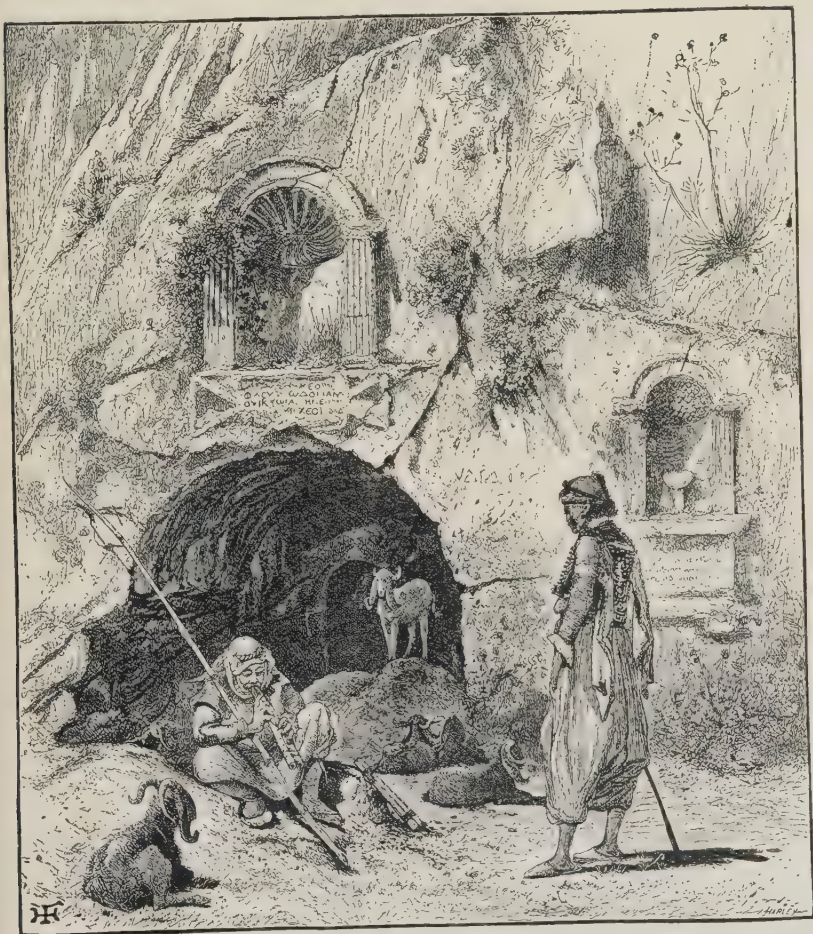
THE HOLY OAK OF TEL EL KADI : THE ANCIENT SITE OF DAN. 4933

of the sources of the Jordan, and there in the valley stands a gnarled old oak which is still considered sacred by the natives.

Another source of the Jordan, only forty minutes distant from Tel el Kadi, comes from Banijas where it bubbles up in front of a picturesque grotto which during the Hellenistic age was dedicated to Pan.



The religion of the Danites differed considerably from the Baal cult of Canaan and the Dagon worship of the Philistines, but it would be a mistake to attribute to them



THE GROTTO OF PAN AT THE SOURCE OF THE JORDAN.

4932

the pure monotheism of later days, for we have seen that in those ancient days they had no objection to the worship of a silver idol of Yahveh.

## SHAMASH AND SAMSON.

The name *Shamshon*<sup>1</sup> whose Babylonian form is *Shamashanu* is derived from *shamash*,<sup>2</sup> "sun," and means "sun-like" or "solar," just as the Hebrew form *Dagon*,<sup>3</sup> the name of the Philistine deity is regarded by the rabbis as a derivative from *dag*,<sup>4</sup> "fish," meaning anything that belongs to the nature of a fish.

The Hebrew form for Samson, i. e. *Shimshon*,<sup>5</sup> is later, for the Greek version of the Septuagint, which is older than the vowels of our Hebrew text, reads *Sampson*.<sup>6</sup>

We can not doubt that *Shamash*, the sun, or *Shamshon*, the sun-god, was in pagan times the patron god of the tribe of Dan.

The name *Dan* means "judge," and Shamash, the sun-god, has always been revered as the patron of justice, the title "Judge" being one of his most common epithets. Hence the terms "Dan" and "Samson" may be regarded as equivalent. The worship of Shamash in Dan is proved by the name of the pre-Israelitic town Beth Shemesh, which is very ancient and is mentioned even as early as in the Tel Amarna tablets.

The Babylonian Samson is called Izdubar,<sup>7</sup> and the word *An-iz-du-bar* is explained in Roscher's lexicon (II 776) as "Divine Judge of Earthly Things," which proves a decided kinship to the hero of Dan.

## DAGON OF THE PHILISTINES.

Dagon is repeatedly mentioned in the Old Testament as the chief god of the Philistines, who in the days of

<sup>1</sup> שִׁמְשׁוֹן      <sup>2</sup> שֶׁמֶשׁ      <sup>3</sup> דָּגוֹן  
<sup>4</sup> דָּג      <sup>5</sup> שִׁמְשׁוֹן      <sup>6</sup> Σάμψων.

<sup>7</sup> The name *Izdubar* is in its cuneiform writing not phonetic, and so the pronunciation is still doubtful. It is explained in a fragment, copied by G. Pinches, as *Gilgamesh*.

Samson were masters of the territory where tented the tribes of Judah and Dan. The Philistines were not Semites but Aryans, and appear to have been kin to the Greeks. They had come by the way of the sea and were different from the Semites in habits as well as language, hence the deep gulf that lay between the two races. The Semites were nomads and traders, and their inherited mode of making a living was by barter; the Philistines, however, were tillers of the ground. While the Phœnicians developed into a seafaring nation, the Israelites began to turn to agriculture only in Samuel's time, and so we may assume that in the days of the Judges the Philistines looked down upon them as an inferior race. On the other hand the Hebrews had a deep-seated contempt for the Philistines because they did not practice circumcision and were therefore thought to be unclean; but we can easily understand that the better educated men among the Israelites profited by intercourse with their agricultural neighbors, and so we find that David's connection with them became of great importance in his career. In fact his superiority among the Israelites may be due to a great extent to his acquaintance with Philistine civilization. Not only did he live among the Philistines as an exile from home, but even when he had become king, he appears to have relied at least for some time upon his Philistine body guard, the Cherethites and Pelethites. The former name for plausible reasons has been connected with the island of Crete, and the Septuagint, indeed, translates Cherethites as Cretans.

While there can be no doubt that Dagon is the chief god of the Philistines, we must not assume that he is their national god; for we know that the worship of Dagon is older than the Philistine immigration. Several Canaanitish names such as Beth Dagon prove its prevalence among the Canaanites also in districts which were never

subject to Philistine rule. The Philistines, like all immigrants in ancient times, used to worship the gods of their new home in order to gain their favor and propitiate their possible wrath against intruders.

Dagon was worshiped also among the Eastern Semites in Babylon, as we know by several names of Babylonian kings such as Ishmi-Dagan and Idin-Dagan, while the name Dagan-takala mentioned in the Tel Amarna letters proves its occurrence among the western Semites as well long before the Philistine invasion.

The name Dagon might as well be a derivative from *dag*, "fish," as Samson is from *shamash*, "sun." While Samson means sunlike, or sunny, Dagon may mean fishy or fishlike, and since ancient times the god Dagon has for this reason been regarded by the rabbis as a fish deity. But we shall see that this interpretation is untenable.

#### YAHVEH STRONGER THAN DAGON.

By some unfortunate accident (see I Sam. iv) the ark of Yahveh, the god of Israel, had fallen into the hands of the Philistines, but through a strange occurrence which in those days was regarded as a miracle and a manifestation of the power of Yahveh, the Philistines deemed it wise to restore the ark to the Israelites. The event is recorded in I Sam. v. 1 ff.

"And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.

"When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

"And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

"And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground



before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only *the stump of Dagon* was left to him.

"Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

"But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof."

The Philistines sent the ark to Gath, and thence to Ekron, and finally decided to return it to the Israelites, as we read in 1 Sam. vi, 1-15:

"And the ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

"And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the Lord? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

"And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.

"Then said they, What shall be the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords.

"Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.

"Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?

“Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them:

“And take the ark of the Lord and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away that it may go.

“And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us.

“And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home:

“And they laid the ark of the Lord upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods.

“And the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Bethshemesh.

“And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it.

“And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the Lord.

“And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the Lord.”

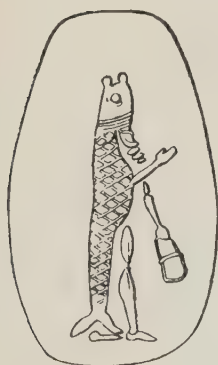
In this way the ark was restored to Israel and the

kine happened to deliver it in Samson's village, Beth She-mesh.

We note in this strange story that in the reading of 1 Sam. v. 4, the italicized words "the stump of" are added by way of interpretation; but Hebrew scholars who believe that Dagon is a fish deity, interpret the words to mean that only the fishy (i. e., Dagon) part of the image was left.

#### FISH DEITIES.

We know that fish deities existed among the Phœnicians. Lucian tells us that he had seen with his own eyes



4027 ASSYRIAN FISH-PRIEST.



A FISH SACRAMENT.

2100

a goddess named Derketo, shaped in the form of a mermaid, and so it appeared quite probable that Dagon was the male counterpart of Derketo.

The Babylonians, too, had fish deities and priests dressed in fish skins. It is probable (if we are allowed to judge from the monuments) that they celebrated a sacrament in which a sacrificial fish was eaten. The fish was sacred to the god *Ea*, the third member of the great trinity Anu, Bel and Ea, the three rulers over heaven, earth and water.

Berosos, a Babylonian priest who wrote in Greek, tells

us of a deity in the shape of a merman, who bore the name of Oannes and was worshiped as the founder of all civilization. The passage is preserved by Eusebius (*Chron. armen.*, p. 9 ed. Mai, Syncellus, p. 28) and reads thus:

“In the first year (of the world) there appeared, rising



A FISH DEITY.

4208a

up from the Persian Gulf, a being endowed with reason whose name was Oannes. The body of this monster was that of a fish, but below the fish's head was a second head which was that of a man, together with the feet of a man which issued from his tail, and with the voice of a man; an image of him is preserved to this day. This being passed



the day among men, but without taking any food, teaching them letters, sciences, and the first principles of every art, how to found cities, to construct temples, to measure and assign limits to land, how to sow and reap; in short everything that can soften manners and constitute civilization, so that from that time forward no one has invented anything new. Then at sunset this monster Oannes descended again into the sea and spent the night among the waves, for he was amphibious. Afterwards there appeared several other similar creatures. . . . Oannes wrote a book on



BABYLONIAN FISH DEITIES.

4211

the origin of things and the rules of civilization, which he delivered to mankind."

This Oannes is also called Odakon, and so he was naturally identified with the Philistine Dagon, and all the fish deities found on Babylonian monuments were in consequence (though preposterously) labelled Babylonian Dagon.

#### DAGON, A GOD OF AGRICULTURE.

The theory that Dagon is a fish deity and that he is to be identified with a male Derketo as well as with the Babylonian Oannes, depends ultimately upon the etymol-

ogy of the name and its derivation from the word *dag*, "fish." However, in spite of its popular acceptance which is based upon an ancient tradition of rabbinical authority, it is upset by one fact of an unequivocal nature that militates against it.

Professor Sayce<sup>1</sup> calls attention to a seal of crystal of the seventh century B. C., preserved in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, England, which in Phœnician characters bears the inscription "Baal Dagon," and in addition exhibits the symbols of an ear of wheat, a winged solar disk, a gazelle, and several stars, but no figure of a fish. This is unquestionable evidence that Dagon was not a fish-deity but the Philistine god of agriculture, whose main symbol was an ear of wheat, and accordingly the name should not be derived from *dag*, fish, but, as Philo Byblius informs us, from the Canaanitish word *dagan*, wheat.

Bearing in mind that the original text of the Hebrew scriptures was written without vowels, it is not impossible that we should read *Dagan* instead of *Dagon*.

The legend to which Philo Byblius refers is ancient and the mooted passage reads as follows:

"Heaven [Anu] succeeding to the kingdom of his father, contracted marriage with his sister, the Earth, and had by her four sons, Ilus (the Hebrew *El*, or *Elohim*) who is called Kronos, and Betylus (the Hebrew *Bethel*), and Dagon, which signifies wheat, and Atlas." And that this same Dagon, the wheat god, is truly the patron of agriculture is further corroborated by the statement made by the same Philo Byblius that he is the inventor of the plow and the first manufacturer of bread, wherefore he is called by his devotees "Zeus Arotrios"; that is, "Jupiter the plowman."<sup>2</sup>

Professor Sayce discusses the question of the nature

<sup>1</sup> *Higher Criticism*, p. 327.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Eusebius, *Præp. Evang.*, I. 6.

of Dagon at full length in his *Higher Criticism*, and on account of its interest we here quote the passage in full. He says:

“Dagon is popularly supposed to have had the form of a fish, the origin of the belief being a derivation of the name from the Hebrew word *dag* “a fish.” But there is nothing in the Scriptural narrative which lends countenance to such an idea. On the contrary the hands of Dagon are referred to (1 Sam. v. 4) and the loss of his



A BABYLONIAN FISH GOD.  
Wrongly identified with Dagon.

4950

head and hands is stated to have left him a mere useless torso.

“The decipherment of the cuneiform texts has informed us who really was the Fish-god sometimes depicted upon Babylonian and Assyrian seals. He was Ea, the god of wisdom and of the deep, with whom Dagon had not the smallest connection. Dagon, in fact, was a divinity of Sumerian origin, who is associated in the inscriptions with Anu, the god of the sky. That his worship was carried

westward from Babylonia we know from the fact that Sargon 'inscribed the laws' of Harran 'according to the wish of the gods Anu and Dagon.' It would appear, therefore, that Dagon was one of the numerous deities whose names and worship were introduced into Canaan during the long period of Babylonian influence and supremacy. Thus a native etymology was found for the name, as the fragments of Sanchuniathon preserved by Philo Byblius expressly inform us, in the Canaanitish word *dagan*, 'corn.' Dagon became a god of corn, an agricultural deity who watched over the growth and ripening of the crops.

"This will explain the curious trespass-offering that was made by the Philistines to the God of Israel. 'Five golden mice. . . .that mar the land' were among the offerings sent by them along with the ark. Yahveh of Israel was looked upon as essentially 'the Lord of hosts,' 'a man of war,' and as such he was the antagonist of the agricultural god of the Philistine cities. He had proved his superior power by overthrowing the image of their god, just as in external nature the corn which was under that god's protection was destroyed by the mice. It was accordingly natural to conclude that the mice were the instruments and symbols of the God of Israel, and that the surest way of appeasing his wrath was to present him with them in a costly form."

#### THE SYMBOL OF THE FISH.

While we accept Professor Sayce's opinion as to the agricultural character of Dagon, we do not deny that the Babylonians, Syrians, and Phœnicians worshiped fish-tailed deities. On the contrary we are convinced of the paramount significance of the fish as a religious symbol, and it may not be amiss to call attention to the fact in our discussion of the Samson legend. A study of the fish as



a religious symbol will help us to understand the origin of Christianity, and its intimate connection with the paganism of the Gentile religions.

The old Latin proverb *Si duo faciunt idem non est idem*, i. e., "If two do the same, it is not the same," is true in the field of religion more than in other domains. Reverence for sacred statues in our own religion is deemed devotion, in other religions, idolatry. Our own deifications are gods, those of the others, devils. Our own symbols are profound,



CHRIST AS A FISH ON THE ROOD.

From a fresco in the Catacombs.

2578

CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS ON A COR-  
NELIAN SEAL.

3207

SYMBOLS ON A LAMP FOUND IN  
THE CATACOMBS.

3209

those of a strange faith, ridiculous if not disgusting. The religious significance of the fish is a queer instance.

How tenacious traditions are, appears from the fact that the fish is a sacred Christian symbol, for Christ himself is frequently represented as a fish or a dolphin in the catacombs. These pictures were made after the precedence of Greek art in which the fish, and especially the dolphin, was sacred to Dionysus, the liberator, the god of wine, of divine enthusiasm, and resurrection.

The immediate reason why the fish became sacred to

Christians is the strange coincidence that the Greek word *Ichthys*, which means "fish" consists of five letters which form the acrostic "Jesus Christ, God's Son, the Saviour."\* But we may be assured that this is a mere afterthought which made the symbol of a fish acceptable to Christians, for the fish was deemed sacred without it and before this explanation had been invented.

#### BEELZEBUL AND BEELZEBUB.

A similar strange injustice is done to the god of the Phœnicians, who is called Baalzebul,<sup>1</sup> "the lord of the high house," a name also applicable to Yahveh, the god of Israel, for Solomon speaks of "the high house" he has built for God (1 Kings viii. 13). The high house is the temple and the temple symbolizes the heavens. Thus the lord of the high house is God of Heaven. Yet Baalzebul (or Beelzebul) has positively been changed into a name of the devil in the New Testament. But such is the fate of gods. The Seth of the Hyksos, corresponding to Yahveh of the Israelites, became the Satan of the Egyptians.

Baalzebub (or Beelzebub) which has been substituted for Beelzebul is commonly translated "fly god," and the assumption has been made that Baalzebub had been worshiped under the symbol of a fly, but we find not the slightest trace of fly worship among the Phœnicians. Pausanias, however, (VIII, 26, 7) tells us that Zeus was called the remover of flies<sup>2</sup> because according to a local legend he had driven away a dangerous swarm of flies from Olympia; and Clement of Alexandria mentions the cult of "Zeus the fly-killer" in Elis (*Protrept.* II, 38).

Obviously we are here confronted with an adventure

\* ΙΧΘΥΣ = Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ.

<sup>1</sup> The English translation reads *Beelzebub* (cp. Matt. x. 25; xii. 24 and 27; Mark iii. 22; Luke xi. 15-18 f.) but the version *Beelzebul* is better established in the original Greek.

<sup>2</sup> Ζεὺς ἀπόμυιος.

of Zeus, who (as St. Patrick drove out the snakes from Ireland) rescued the people of Greece from a plague of insects, and we cannot doubt that the Greek legend commemorates the annual recurrence of the disappearance of the flies in autumn. Such a story might have easily been told of Heracles, Izdubar and also of Samson. It belongs to the same class of mythological tales and there is as little reason to regard Baal as a god of flies, as there would be to look upon St. Patrick as the saint of snakes.



4513

## THE HOME OF THE SAMSON LEGEND.

BETH SHEMESH.

DEFENDERS of the historicity of the Samson legend make much of the definite localities in which the story has received its final setting. In fact the local coloring is made the main argument to disprove the mythical character of our hero. Accordingly it will be indispensable to devote a few pages to the geography of the Samson story. We shall see that the places of Samson's birth, his marriage, and especially his death have been positively determined, though other places, such as Lehi Ramath, remain quite uncertain.

We do not believe that the localization of the adventures of Samson gives any support to the historicity, but on the contrary are inclined to think that the selection of his home furnishes an unequivocal hint of Samson's solar character, for Beth Shemesh, the "house (i. e., the temple) of Shamash," was a sacred site of sun worship. If, therefore, a solar legend became crystalized in saga form it would naturally be localized in and around such a city as Beth Shemesh.

### THE VALLEY.

A few miles east of Jerusalem we reach a valley (or *wadi* as valleys are called in the Orient) which affords





Ain-Shems (which means "spring of the sun") is built upon the site of the ancient Beth Shemesh, presumably a center of solar worship in the prehistoric days of paganism. Here the ark of the covenant stood for a long time after it had been peacefully returned by the Philistines. On the opposite bluff about two and one half miles north-north-east is the place of the ancient Zorah; and opposite



UPPER WADI ES-SARAR.

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Zorah, within its immediate vicinity, only about one and one-half miles northeast is the place Eshtaol.

Zorah, the home of Samson, is commonly translated "the place of hornets," because the name *Zor'ah*,<sup>1</sup> is spelled out with the same consonants as *Zir'ah*,<sup>2</sup> "hornet." Both

<sup>1</sup> צִרְעָה<sup>2</sup> צִרְעָה

words are derived from the same root *Zara'*,<sup>3</sup> "to lay low, to castigate."

The meaning of the name *Eshtaol*<sup>4</sup> is doubtful, but Hebrew scholars assume that it contains the root *Sha'al*,<sup>5</sup> which may mean "to demand," "to ask for," or "to be hollow," and is connected in the former sense with the name *Shaul*<sup>6</sup> (i. e., Saul), and in the latter sense with *Sheol*,<sup>7</sup> "the pit," i. e., the habitat of the dead.



SHRINE OF THE WELI SHAMAT.

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In the Wadi Es-Sarar, near the site of the ancient Zorah, is a Moslem holy place on a hill which rises 357 meters over the level of the Mediterranean, where a little shrine is sacred to the weli<sup>8</sup> Shamat, possibly a corruption of the word Shamash or Shamshon. It is built in the usual style of these whitened sepulchres with a little cupola and its incumbent, the sheik of the weli Shamat, claims that it is the tomb of the Hebrew Samson, but undoubtedly all he knows of Samson he has learned from the Christians that have visited the place.

<sup>3</sup> צָרַע<sup>4</sup> אֶשְׁתָּאֵל<sup>5</sup> שָׁאֵל<sup>6</sup> שָׁאֵל<sup>7</sup> שְׁאוֹל<sup>8</sup> The word *weli* means "saint."



## MAHANEH-DAN.

Mahaneh-Dan means the camp of the tribe of Dan, which (according to Judges xviii. 12) was situated west of Kirjath-Jearim, (i. e., "the city of the woods" probably the present village El-Krya el- Enab) and it was called



SITE OF ANCIENT ZORAH.

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so because it was the place from which the Danites started from Zorah and Eshtaol for their northern home. But when the Danites still lived in southern Palestine, we are told that it was the place where the spirit of Yahveh began to stir in Samson, and this Mahaneh-Dan is said to be



situated between Zorah and Eshtaol (Judges xiii. 25) the site of the burial place of Samson's family (Judges xvi. 31). The two geographical specifications (Judges xiii. 25 and xviii. 12) are contradictory, and it is not impossible that we should read Manahath Dan instead of Mehaneh Dan, which would connect the place with the name of Samson's father. Manahath was one of the sons of Shobal, the Horite (see Gen. xxxvi. 23 and 1 Chron. i. 40) but the name is also mentioned as a place (see 1 Chron. viii. 6) which must have been the home of the Manahethites (the Manoah Clan) and, being situated in the domain of Dan, may very well have also been called Manahath-Dan.<sup>9</sup>

Samson's father was called Manoah,<sup>10</sup> which may either be derived from Noah,<sup>11</sup> meaning "rest," with the prefix *ma*; or from *manah*,<sup>12</sup> "to present a gift." It is also a town near Zorah, and the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* says: "Manoah is obviously the legendary eponym of the Manahathites of Judah or Dan." The name of the Manahathites is derived from the same root as Manoah, and so Manoah may very well be regarded as having originally been the patriarch from whom the tribe was supposed to have derived its name.

#### TIBNEH AND ASCALON.

Walking down the valley westward for about an hour from Beth Shemesh, we find the place Tibneh, the ancient Timnath, where Samson met with his first love adventure, and where he married the daughter of a Timnathite. Ascalon, the Philistine city where Samson slew thirty Philistines, is about twenty-five miles further down on the coast of the Mediterranean.

Ascalon<sup>13</sup> belonged to the territory assigned to the lot

<sup>9</sup> See *Enc. Biblica*, s. v., "Manahethites" and "Mahaneh Dan."

<sup>10</sup> מָנוֹחַ

<sup>11</sup> נֹחַ

<sup>12</sup> מָנָה

<sup>13</sup> The Biblical Ashkelon (אַשְׁקֶלֶן).

of Judah, but its conquest (Judges i. 18) was only temporary, for in the enumeration of the cities of Judah (Joshua xv. 25) it is not mentioned, and this indirect statement is corroborated by a comparison with further testimony implied in other passages (cf. Judges xiv. 19; 1 Sam. vi. 17;



RUINS AT TIBNEH: SITE OF TIMNATH.

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2 Sam. i. 20; Jer. xxv, 20; xlvii, 7). Ascalon survived the curses of the prophets Amos (i. 8), Zephaniah (ii. 4) and Zechariah (ix. 5) who preached against it, and it reached the zenith of prosperity at the time of Jesus. Herod the

Great embellished it with magnificent buildings, because it was his birthplace, and he selected it as a residence for his sister Salome.

The surrounding country was famous for its culture of grape wine and onions, which were known in Italy as *Ascaloniae*, a name still preserved in the French word *échalottes*.

During the crusades Ascalon was repeatedly captured and lost by the Christians, but finally fell permanently into the hands of the Mohammedans who allowed it to fall into decay. In 1832 Ibrahim Pasha tried to rebuild it but his efforts proved vain and to-day its site is marked merely by a heap of ruins.

#### ETAM AND LEHI.

The cliff Etam has been identified with a very narrow gorge in the Wadi Ishma'in. Though the cleft is very imposing and seems to fit all the requisites of the story, we ought to bear in mind that a town in Judæa was actually called Etam, which is situated southeast of Bethlehem and northeast of Tekoa. The cleft in the neighborhood of this town is not as grand as the cleft in the valley of Ishma'in, but it is probable that the writer of the Samson story had the latter in mind and not the former.

The site of the Philistine city Lehi is not known, and all attempts to identify it have proved failures. With it the height of Lehi, the mortar of Lehi, and Enhaqqore, the spring of the crier, i. e., the partridge or the ass, have remained unidentified, but we must assume that they were definite localities well known to the original author of the story.

#### GAZA.

The great center of all intellectual and commercial life of southern Palestine in Samson's days, was the city



of Gaza, which seems to have been like a little Paris for its vicinity. We must conclude from the Samson story that the splendor and the temptations of the city proved a great



GAZA.

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attraction to the villagers and mountaineers of the surrounding country. Even to-day we find débris of magnifi-



cent marble edifices which tell of its ancient grandeur. Professor Ebers describes it as follows:

"The present city, whose ancient name as now pronounced by the inhabitants sounds approximately like *Rahsseh*, is either extremely muddy or very dusty according to the season of the year. The more insignificant the modern buildings are, the more noticeable is the great



IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF GAZA.

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number of marble ruins on all sides. There is not a garden nor a courtyard where some such relics have not been discovered, while almost every threshold and almost every lintel consists of a fragment of an old pillar. In the narrow streets the passer-by must often step over a mud puddle on a marble cylinder lying directly across a door-

way. If he proceeds farther he will probably come through a stable to a tiny courtyard on one side of which is the



HEBRON.

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kitchen, and farther on through a passage-way he will reach the large inner court paved with marble around



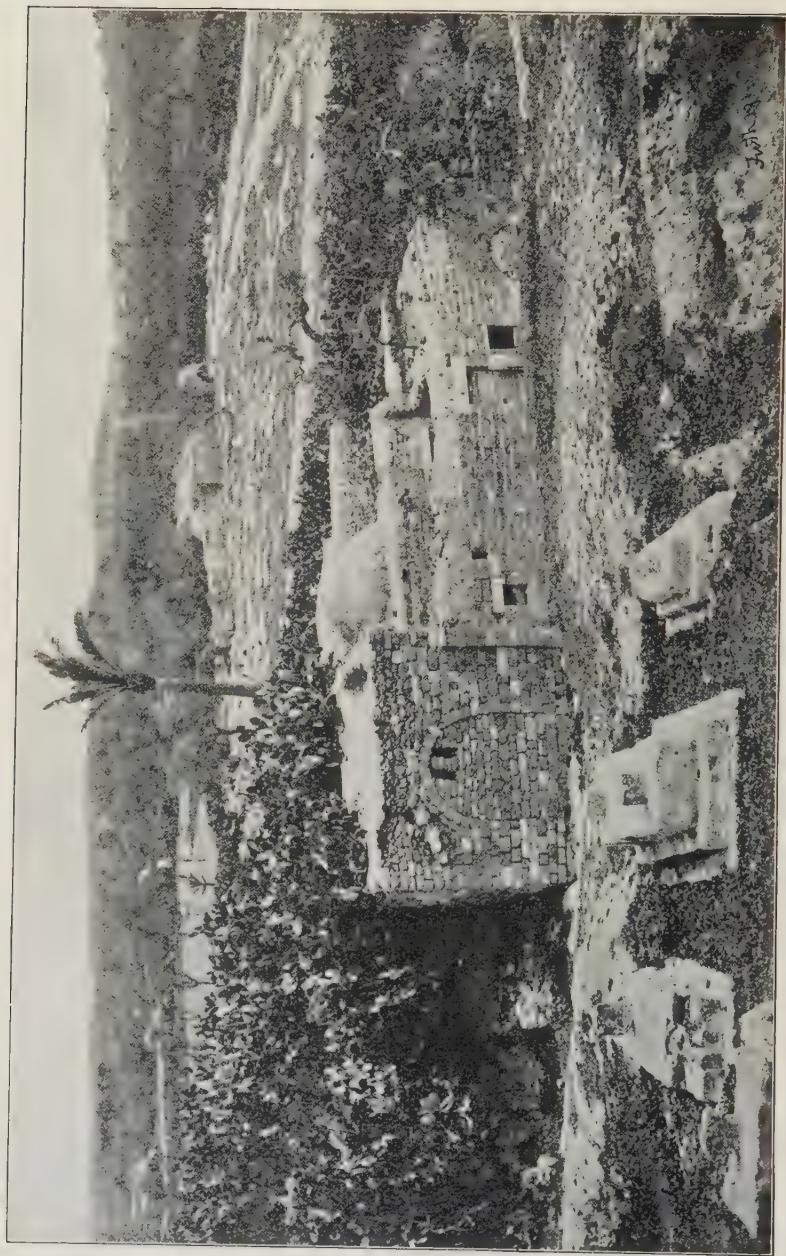
which open a series of rooms, separated from the court by arcades. Right here may be found many an ancient pillar with capitals of every description: Corinthian, Roman, as appear in the public buildings of Herod, and By-



VIEW OF HEBRON FROM ABRAHAM'S OAK.

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zantine, can be seen. They stood originally in some old temple, and then perhaps in a church, and later were dug out of the ruins and used in building the house. Moreover some polished marble slabs walled in between red Roman



SITE OF THE GATES OF GAZA.



bricks give the walls a mottled appearance. It is as if we had before us the caricature of a palace of Damascus.

"It is a well-known fact that the Samson story makes its hero appear also in this city of the ancient Philistines. He is said to have taken 'the door of the gate of the city and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron' (Judges xvi. 3). The Jebel el-Muntar at the southeast of the city is pointed out to-day as this hill. The location of the old city gate as well as the temple of Dagon where Samson met his death, are also shown to travelers."

Local tradition of Gaza naturally selects the nearest hill toward the east as the point to which Samson carried the gates. This interpretation of the legend, however, flatly contradicts the Bible story which makes Samson carry the gates about forty miles up into the high lands of Judah to the old city of Hebron so well known in Hebrew tradition as one of the oldest cities of Palestine where Abraham tented, where he bought a burying place and where up to this day a weatherbeaten tree still bears the name of Abraham's oak.

While Gaza, Ascalon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron are usually referred to as Philistine cities, we must not think that they were of Philistine foundation. They were only colonized by these strangers that came by sea from distant Mediterranean islands; for the Tel Amarna letters mention the same cities long before the Philistine immigration.



## SAMSON'S BIRTH.

### THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT.

THE birth of Samson (Judges xiii) is typical of many heroes of the Old Testament, and it finds a realistic interpretation if we consider the religious traditions of the Semitic Orient to-day. It reads as follows in Prof. G. F. Moore's translation:

#### *Samson's Birth.*

The Israelites again offended YHWH, and He gave them into the power of the Philistines for forty years.<sup>1</sup>

Now there was a certain man of Zorah, of the clan of the Danites, named Manoah, whose wife was barren and had no child. And the Messenger of JHWH appeared to the woman, and said to her: "Thou art barren and hast borne no child; but thou shalt conceive and bear a son. Now, therefore, beware, and do not drink wine or other intoxicating drink, and do not eat anything unclean. For thou art with child, and wilt bear a son; and no razor shall touch his head, for from the womb the boy shall be

<sup>1</sup> The indented passage has been added by a Deuteronomist (*D*), who here vents his indignation at the pagan spirit of some features of the story without otherwise interfering with the text.

a religious votary; *he will make a beginning of delivering Israel from the Philistines.*<sup>2</sup>

The woman came and told her husband: "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like that of the Messenger of God, very venerable; but I did not ask him whence he came, nor did he tell me his name. And he said to me: 'Thou art with child, and wilt bear a son; now, therefore, do not drink wine nor intoxicating drink, and do not eat anything unclean, for from the womb to the day of his death the boy shall be a religious votary.'"

Then Manoah besought JHVH, and said: "I pray thee, O Lord, let the man of God whom Thou didst send come again to us and teach us what we shall do to the boy that is to be born."

And God hearkened to the prayer of Manoah, and the Messenger of God came again to the woman as she was tarrying in the field. Manoah her husband was not with her. And the woman ran at once, and told her husband, saying to him: "The man who came to me the other day has appeared to me."

So Manoah rose, and followed his wife; and when he came to the man, Manoah said to him: "Art thou the man who spoke to the woman?"

He answered: "I am."

Then Manoah said: "Now, when that which thou dost foretell comes true, what shall be the rule for the boy and his mode of life?"

And the Messenger of JHVH replied to Manoah: "Let the woman avoid all that I bade her; she must not eat any product of the vine, and let her not drink wine or other intoxicating drink, nor eat anything unclean; every thing that I commanded her she must observe."

<sup>2</sup> The italicized passage is a comment added by a later scribe or redactor of Ephraimic scriptures. He recognizes Samson's divine mission, but bearing in mind that he accomplished nothing speaks of it as "a beginning of delivering Israel from the Philistines."

And Manoah said to the Messenger of JHVH: "Let us press thee to stay, and let us prepare thee a kid."

But the Messenger of JHVH answered Manoah: "Though thou press me, I will not eat of thy food; but if thou wilt make a burnt-offering, thou must offer it to JHVH."



THE ANNUNCIATION OF SAMSON'S BIRTH.

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By Rubens.

And Manoah said to the Messenger of JHVH: "What is thy name? that if thy prediction come true we may honor thee."

The Messenger of JHVH answered him: "Why dost thou inquire my name, seeing it is ineffable?"

So Manoah took a kid [and the cereal offering]<sup>3</sup> and offered it as a burnt-offering on the rock to JHVH, the

<sup>3</sup> The two bracketed passages are post-Exilic glosses.



Wonder Worker. When the flame ascended heavenward from the altar, the Messenger of JHVH ascended in the flame of the altar, while Manoah and his wife were looking on; and they fell on their faces to the earth.

And the Messenger of JHVH appeared no more to Manoah and his wife. Then Manoah knew that it was the Messenger of JHVH. And Manoah said to his wife: "We shall certainly die, for we have seen a god." But his wife said to him: "If JHVH had meant to kill us, He would not have received at our hands a burnt-offering, and would not have shown us all these things, and would not have announced to us such a thing."

And the woman bore a son, and named him Samson; and the boy grew up, and JHVH blessed him. And the spirit of JHVH began to stir him [at Mahaneh-Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol].

#### THE HOLY MEN OF THE SEMITES.

Prof. Samuel Ives Curtiss, who made a special study of the subject, discovered that the ancient Semitic rites mentioned in the Old Testament, are still practiced among the common people of Syria. He came to the conclusion that the ancient religion of the proto-Semites even to-day is the religion of the common people in Hither Asia; and so it happens that many stories in the Old Testament find an explanation in customs that are still prevalent. This is evinced by the atonement blood-sacrifices performed for the purpose of effectiveness of prayer; and in spite of the monotheistic doctrines of the three religions, now officially established in the Orient, the Weli or patron saint of a local shrine is still the main refuge of the natives. Sacrifices are still offered on the heights as well as before the entrance to the house or tent, and the door posts and lintels are still besmeared with the blood of the victim for the sake of sanctifying the place and protecting it against

evil influences.<sup>4</sup> The main thing of interest is the part which holy men, representatives of the deity, or of the Weli, have been playing ever since and are playing still all over Syria with the exception perhaps of the parts inhabited by Protestants; for Protestantism is the only religion that by its sobriety cuts off the ancient practices and superstitions.

Professor Curtiss has devoted a special chapter to the holy men of Syria. They, as well as the religious sheiks, are supposed to be possessed of mysterious powers and all of them practice exorcism. Says Professor Curtiss:

"The 'holy men' and the religious sheiks cast out evil spirits, which resemble closely those about whom we read in the time of our Lord. They exorcise evil spirits from those who are ill. They think such persons are possessed by the *jinn*, who seem to be the same as the demons in the time of Christ.

"There are certain saints that have almost the powers of physicians assigned to them. Some of them would seem to be specialists. They perform cures for rheumatism, for bad eyes, and other ailments. One shrine, near Solomon's hot-air baths, about four hours from Karyaten, in the Syrian desert, is good for barren women.

"As barrenness is considered almost the greatest disgrace that can befall an Oriental woman, and girls are not reckoned in the enumeration of a family, a barren woman often seeks a son from a local saint or weli; thus the story of Hannah is not unfrequently repeated.

"One of the most conspicuous cases was related to me by Rev. E. A. Hanauer, of Jerusalem, who was an eye-witness of part of the incident. There was a Syrian woman who was barren, and who, in the bitterness of her soul, went to Neby Daud,<sup>5</sup> on the traditional site of Mount

<sup>4</sup>For further details of Professor Curtiss's work see "The Religion of Proto-Semitism" in *The Open Court*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 421 ff.

<sup>5</sup>i. e., Prophet David.

Zion, and vowed that if the saint would give her a son she would give him a fat sheep. In due time a boy was born. The father and mother, on their way to the shrine, stopped to rest at a house where the missionary heard the story from the lips of the glad mother.

"Sometimes a man vows that if the saint will grant him a son he will pay for his weight in silver coins. The teacher of a Greek school in Safita was present at the payment of such a vow. When the silver placed in the balances nearly tipped the scale, the father threw in two or three gold pieces.

"Sometimes a woman, in her ardent desire for a son, will vow that if the saint will grant her request she will sacrifice a sheep each year. Such was the vow of a woman at the cave where Abraham is reputed to have been born at Berza near Damascus. At the last report she had already sacrificed three sheep.

"There can be no question that barren women, as the result of such vows, sometimes receive the power to bear children. Perhaps this is an indication of the domination of the mind over the body; or, as a native physician suggests, the very exertion consequent on visiting a shrine may bring the body into a normal condition."

The holy men are not priests nor have they anything to do with the dervishes of the Moslems, or the monks of the Christians. They are a type of their own and may be anything but holy or moral in the present acceptance of the words, for they correspond to the Sodomites<sup>6</sup> of the Old Testament, whom the religious reformers in the time of Josiah removed from the temple of Jerusalem<sup>7</sup> in the year 621 B. C.

The submissiveness of the common people to the "holy men" is almost incredible, for we learn that uneducated

<sup>6</sup>The words "holy" and "sodomite" (in Hebrew *Kadesh*) are derived from the same root *kadash*, which means "to separate, to set apart."

<sup>7</sup>2 Kings xxiii. 7.

women of the country do not shrink from their embrace. Says Curtiss:

"So far as they are not imposters, they are men whom we would call insane, known among the Syrians as *mejnûn*, possessed by a *jinn*, or spirit. They often go in filthy garments, or without clothing. Since they are regarded as intoxicated by deity, the most dignified men, and of the highest standing among the Moslems, submit to utter indecent language at their bidding without rebuke, and ignorant Moslem women do not shrink from their approach, because in their superstitious belief they attribute to them, as men possessed by God, a divine authority which they dare not resist.

"In a certain family in Nebk the wife, a perfectly respectable woman, apparently with the consent of her husband, considers it wrong to refuse a 'holy man.' Her name is well known in the community where she lives."

Mr. Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (page 147) says:

"Women are taught to believe that the highest bliss for themselves and their families is to be obtained by yielding themselves to the embraces of these beings in whom the divine nature mysteriously coexists with the form and appetite of true humanity."

Professor Curtiss adds the following description:

"Their appearance, and the expressions regarding them, afford some illustrations of the popular estimate of ancient seers, or prophets, in the time of Hosea: 'The prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad';<sup>8</sup> and in the time of Jeremiah, the man who made himself a prophet was considered as good as a madman.<sup>9</sup> We are reminded, too, of one of the signs by which Saul was considered a prophet, when he stripped off his clothes, and lay down naked all that day and all that night, so that

<sup>8</sup> Hos. ix. 7. Cf. George Adam Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, New York, 1896, p. 28 n.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. xxix. 26.



the people in view of these demonstrations, with which they were so familiar, said, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' "<sup>10</sup>

#### THE KID OFFERING.

The story of Samson's conception is very realistically told, and its occurrence, perhaps not in one case only but in many instances of the same kind, is quite plausible if considered in the light of ancient Semitic customs which are so inveterate that they are preserved even to-day. Manoah, far from having any misgivings about the report of his wife, is greatly pleased when she meets the stranger again, provides for the demanded ritual sacrifice, and the child that is to be born is promised to lead the life of a *Nazir* from the moment of his birth.

The sacrifice of the kid is not without significance, as will appear from a comment by Paul Haupt written in explanation of the references to kids in that collection of Hebrew love ditties which are incorporated in the Bible under the title "The Song of Solomon." Professor Haupt says:

"The phrase, 'Feed thy kids,' in the answer of the lover has a special meaning. A kid was the customary present given to a female friend (Arab. *ḡadiqe*) who was visited by a man from time to time. When Judah saw his daughter-in-law, Tamar, who had covered her face and wrapped herself, he said to her, I will send thee a kid; and when Samson visited his Philistine 'friend' at Timnath he brought her a kid. Such a gift was probably expected at every visit of the husband. The 'bride' remained at her father's house, and the 'husband' visited her there. According to Ammianus Marcellinus (xiv. 4) marriage among the Saracens was a temporary contract for which the wife received a price. In Persia these temporary alliances are still rec-

<sup>10</sup> 1 Sam xix. 21-24.

ognized as legal. In the Book of Tobit (ii. 12) we read that after Tobit had been stricken with blindness, his wife, Anna, went to a factory where women were employed as weavers, and when the owners gave her one day a kid in addition to her wages, she fell out with her husband who would not believe her story and insisted on the kid being returned to the owners of the factory, as he felt ashamed of his wife. We know also that a young he-goat was the offering of the Greek *hetæræ* to the goddess of love Aphrodite." In the Samson story we are told that "Samson went to visit his wife, taking with him a kid."

Steinthal regards the story of Samson's birth as of later origin, which may or may not be so, yet there is no reason for any discrimination for it is quite in keeping with the stories of Samson's deeds. One thing, however, must have been typical in the ancient traditions of solar heroes, namely, that their birth was not an ordinary occurrence but an event of supernatural interference. Solar heroes are supposed to be the children of a god and their birth is always miraculous.

#### THEOPHANIES.

The birth story of Samson is considered as one of the best told theophanies of the Old Testament, and it may be worth while to repeat here for the benefit of readers not versed in recent results of theology, a few well-known facts concerning the development of the Jewish God idea. In those Biblical passages which belong to the older period, God (or rather Yahveh) is humanized to such an extent that he (as for instance in the creation story) takes a walk in the garden for his recreation and speaks with Adam and Eve. God was believed to appear in fire and it was supposed to be dangerous or even fatal to see God or to hear his voice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Theophanies are recorded in Gen. xvii. 1; xxxv. 6; Ex. iii. 6; xix. 21; xxxiii. 20 ff.; Judges vi. 22; xiii, 22, etc.

The most important theophany is related in the third chapter of Exodus where Yahveh appears to Moses in the bush which "burned with fire and the bush was not consumed." Here God reveals to Moses his name Yahveh<sup>2</sup> which was regarded with so much awe that later generations ceased to pronounce it and in reading the scriptures



THE BURNING BUSH.

5048

By Schnorr von Karolsfeld.

substituted for it the word *adonaj*,<sup>3</sup> i. e., "my Lord."<sup>4</sup> But God could not call himself "my Lord," and so the rabbis introduced in this special passage (Ex. iii. 14) another

<sup>2</sup> יהוה<sup>3</sup> אֲדֹנָי

<sup>4</sup> Since the name "Yahveh" was always read "ādonaj," the three vowels of *āddōnāj* (shortness of vowel as ě, then ō, and finally the broad *a*) were written under the ineffable tetragram, which produced the form יהוה result-

substitution for the holy name, viz., *eheyeh* (אֶהְיֶה), which means "I am," or rather, "I shall be."<sup>5</sup>

Yahveh must be an old Semitic deity as the word appears in ancient Babylonian names such as *Ya've-ilu* mentioned by Delitzsch.<sup>6</sup> Among the Israelites its use was originally limited to the southern tribes, especially Judah, Benjamin and Dan, and so Yahveh is naturally the God of Samson. In northern Israel God was called Elohim and also Zebaoth, i. e., "[Lord of] the starry Hosts," but when the different Hebrew tribes of whom presumably only the southern ones had been in Egypt, coalesced into a nation called Israel, the three names were identified to mean one and the same God, the God of Israel, and Jeremiah uses all three at once calling God "Yahveh Elohim Zebaoth."

Yahveh was the God of Jethro, the priest of Midan, a Kenite, who lived near Mount Horeb, and there Yahveh revealed himself to Moses, Jethro's son-in-law.

Yahveh said unto Moses (Ex. vi. 2-3):

"I am YHVH, and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as *El Shaddaj*, but by my name JHVH was I not known to them."

*El Shaddaj*,<sup>7</sup> as well as Elohim, is a plural form derived from *shad*,<sup>8</sup> "strong," and is commonly translated "God Almighty." The same word slightly modified as *shcdim*<sup>9</sup> (singular *shcd*<sup>10</sup>) denotes pagan deities and is translated in the Septuagint by "demons."<sup>11</sup>

ing among people unacquainted with Hebrew traditions in the monstrous combination of the word "Jehovah." This queer word formation is of comparatively recent origin, for it does not occur anywhere before the Reformation and was invented in the sixteenth century by Protestant Bible translators who knew enough Hebrew to read the letters as they were written, but not enough to understand the meaning, origin and history of the word.

<sup>5</sup> The first part of verse 14 is obviously a gloss which has been inserted into the text. Cf. Arnold's "The Divine Name in Exodus III, 14," in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, XXIV, Pt. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Babel and Bible*, p. 150 ff. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co.

<sup>7</sup> אֱלֹשֶׁתַּי

<sup>8</sup> שָׁר

<sup>9</sup> שְׁדִים

<sup>10</sup> שֶׁד

<sup>11</sup> δαιμόνια,



The summit of Mount Sinai or Horeb was regarded as the place where Yahveh resided and so Elijah visits Mount Horeb where he finds Yahveh in the still small voice. In Isaiah's remarkable vision (Is. vi. 1 ff.) Yahveh appears between seraphim (winged serpent-spirits), while Ezekiel sees him surrounded by winged cherubim; the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot, they had the hands of a man under their wings, and each had four faces, the faces of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle (Ez. i. 5-10), and the color of Yahveh himself was as of amber above, and below as of fire.



THE STILL SMALL VOICE.

5051

Most naive is the description of Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel meeting God on Mount Sinai (Ex. xxiv. 10), where we read that "they saw the God of Israel and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness."

In a similar way Yahveh converses with Moses and members of his family, one striking instance being recorded in Num. xii. 1 ff., where God appears visibly in the shape of a pillar of cloud.

Again in Exodus xxxiii, 11 we read that "the Lord spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." In contradiction to these theophanies Yahveh says to Moses (Ex. xxxiii. 20): "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no one see me and live." However, to show Moses an extraordinary favor, Yahveh will allow him to catch a glimpse of his glory from behind:

"And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen."

Less comical but not less pagan and assuredly more barbarous is another theophany related in Exodus v. 24-26, in which Yahveh's wrath toward Zipporah, the wife of Moses, is calmed only after the circumcision of their son Gerson. The crudeness of the God-conception preserved in this strange passage marks these verses as a relic of the savage age which has presumably been retained by the redactor only because the incident narrated might silence the objection that a mother would naturally have against the rite of circumcision; and the Jews of the Babylonian captivity regarded this ceremony as an essential and indispensable part of their religion, for it was the sign of their covenant with God.

The passage reads:

"And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord [YHVH] met him [i. e., Moses], and sought to kill him.

"Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.

"So he [JHVH] let him [Moses] go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision."

In the later period of Jewish monotheism, the invisibility of God became more and more a part of the Jewish faith, and so theophanies in "any manner of similitude" were denied by the Deuteronomist (Deut. iv. 15). Still God was believed to have appeared to Abraham and Jacob and to have spoken to them (Ex. vi. 3).<sup>12</sup>

It has been suggested that many of the old theophanies have been modified by post-Exilic redactors into appearances of angels. The idea that God should appear in human form became offensive, and so the words "messenger of Yahveh" were substituted for "Yahveh." This view is supported by the fact that in Gen. xvi. 7, 9, 11, it is stated that "the angel of Yahveh" appeared to Hagar and spoke to her; yet in the same story (verse 13) we read that it was "Yahveh" himself who spoke to her. In the same way "the angel of Yahveh" appears to Gideon (Judges vi. 22) but he calls him "Yahveh Elohim."

These inconsistencies may simply be a result of the redactor's carelessness in his alterations. At any rate the angel or messenger of Yahveh is frequently identified with Yahveh.<sup>13</sup>

One peculiar confusion which can only be due to the insufficient alterations of a late redactor occurs in the story of Abraham's theophany at Mamre, Gen. xviii, where we read of three men who are addressed sometimes in the singular and sometimes in the plural. One of the three is identified with Yahveh, while the other two are described (in xix) as two angels, yet these in turn too are addressed and also speak in the singular and indeed they speak and act as Yahveh himself (xix. 21).

In consideration of the probability that "the messenger

<sup>12</sup> Cp. Gen. xvii. 1; xxxv. 9.

<sup>13</sup> See such narratives as Gen. xxii. 11ff.; xviii. 2; xv. 3 ff.; Num. xxii. 32-35, especially 35 to be compared with xxiv. 13; Judges xi. 1-5; vi. 11-24; compare especially verses 11 and 20 ff. Differences between Yahveh and his angel are made in Gen. xxiv. 7, 40 (compare verses 27 and 48); Num. xxii. 31; Judges xiii. 8; 2 Samuel xxiv. 15, 17.

of Yahveh" is a later interpolation for Yahveh himself, we may very well assume that according to the ancient Samson legend, Yahveh himself appeared to Manoah's wife, and indeed, we may even venture the assumption that according to the oldest form of the legend, Samson was regarded as the son of Yahveh. It is a matter of course that this idea could no longer be countenanced by the Deuteronomists from their rigorous monotheistic standpoint, and so we may regard the birth story of Samson as we have it now, to be an edition *ad usum delphini*.

#### THE MEANING OF "NAZIR."

The children of Israel were invaders of Palestine. The Canaanites and Philistines who had possession of the land lived in cities and must have looked with fear and disdain upon these gypsylike marauders who came in such numbers as to endanger the safety of the country. On the other hand, the Israelites at the time of the invasion looked upon civilization as pagan and unnatural.<sup>1</sup> They lived in tents and scorned houses. They made their fires by friction, not by flint and steel. They worshiped on altars of unhewn stones not yet touched by the chisel of man, under trees and at wells, and cherished a contempt for gods fashioned by human hands. They had a primitive kind of bread baked without leaven, and they abstained from fermented drinks, not because they were intoxicating, as a later interpretation has it, but because the natural product was spoiled by the artificial interference of human culture which was considered an alienation from God, the divinity of nature.

The priestly redactors explain the word *nazir* as being derived from the root *nazar*,<sup>2</sup> the niphal form of which means "to separate," and the Nazir<sup>3</sup> was assumed to be

<sup>1</sup> For explanation of this most important point see the author's article "Yahveh and Manitou," *The Monist*, IX, p. 382.

<sup>2</sup> נָזַר

<sup>3</sup> נָזִיר (The pronunciation of נ is dz.)



holy because separated from profane society for the purpose of leading a life of devotion.

Samson is regarded as a typical Nazir. In fact, being historically the first one who is called by that name, he is regarded as the prototype and ideal of Nazirism.

Whatever the etymology of the word may be, the original meaning is certainly not "separateness" in the sense of "holiness," but a natural state, a condition in which the artificial factor of human culture has not yet interfered with man's primitive habits of life.

In the jubilee year, for instance, when agriculture is suspended, the vine which is left unpruned is called *nazir*, and the jubilee year as such is celebrated in recollection of Israel's primitive condition when it was still walking with Yahveh in the desert.

As the *nazir* grape is the fruit of those vines which have not been pruned but are allowed their natural growth, we will scarcely be mistaken when we regard the Nazir as a man whose life develops untrammelled by civilization. No razor is suffered to touch his head and the exuberant mass of his hair is typical of the whole man.

#### GENTILE NAZIRISM.

If the Samson legend regards the hair as the sign of Samson's vitality, it is quite in keeping with the folklore of other nations, especially the Syrians, and we can have no doubt that this notion dates back to the most primitive age in which the rays of the sun were regarded as the hair of the sun-god. The sun-god loses his strength when he is shorn of his hair in winter, and a faithful devotee voluntarily suffers the same fate so as to partake also of his final triumph and resurrection.

The custom of regarding the hair as sacred to a god, preeminently so to the sun-god, is not limited to Palestine but may be traced throughout Syria and extended even

to Greece. Lucian tells us in his most interesting essay on "The Syrian Goddess" that the people in Hierapolis of Syria are addicted to a custom which is otherwise also known to have obtained in Troizene of Argolis in Greece.

Lucian says (last chapter of *De Dea Syr.*): "There is a law of the Troizenians according to which no youth nor virgin is allowed to marry until they have sacrificed their hair to Hippolytus, and a similar custom prevails in Hierapolis. There people let the hair of children grow from childhood and regard it as something sacred which should not be touched by shears. When they reach puberty a lock is cut off in the temple and the same together with the first beard is suspended in the sanctuary in a little silver, sometimes golden, vase upon which the name of the donor is engraved."

Lucian being a native of Samosata, which is situated near Hierapolis, says he himself had undergone the ceremony of hair-cutting and had a lock of his hair offered in the temple, where, as he writes, it might still be seen at the date on which he composed his essay.

Customs of letting the hair grow and of cutting it as a sacrificial offering to the deity, are found all over the world and date back to prehistoric times. Vows to that effect are mentioned in the New Testament. Paul had "shorn his head in Cenchrea for he had a vow" (Acts xviii. 18), and the same incident is mentioned of four men in another passage in Acts (xxi. 23).

There can be no doubt that the underlying thought of this practice is also intimately connected with the priestly observance of shaving the head. This is notably true of the ancient Egyptian priesthood and of Buddhist monks; yet there is nowhere in the sacred books of either religion any plausible reason to account for the custom. In India the custom of shaving the hair from a religious motive is unquestionably older than Buddha himself, for we are

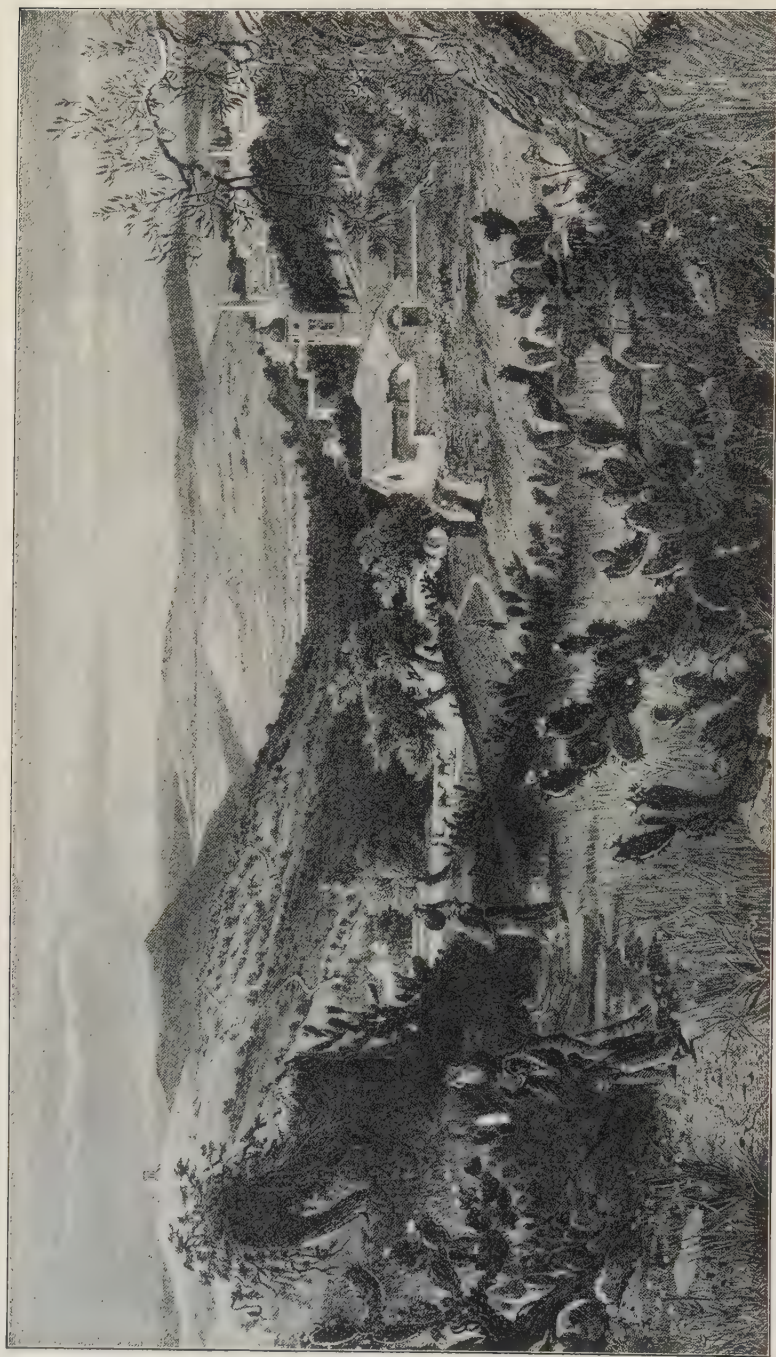
told that when Prince Gautama retired from the world, he cut off his hair, and the legend has it that the tuft of hair was carried up by the devas to the sky where it formed the constellation of the "Hairknot," called in our astronomy "the hair of Berenice." Here the practice of cutting one's hair in token of renouncing the world is presupposed as generally prevalent in India and an explanation is not deemed necessary.

In a similar way as baptism is now commonly performed by a mere sprinkling, and an actual emersion under the water is not generally deemed necessary, because in symbolic acts the mere indication is sufficient if performed in the right spirit and by the proper authorities, so in the Christian world the shaving of the hair has been reduced to a small spot called the tonsure,—which practice is observed even to-day in the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches, constituting a last reminiscence of this most ancient sacrifice of the hair.

#### THE ETYMOLOGY OF "NAZARENE."

The word and title Nazir (for it has become an appellation of a certain class of Hebrew saints) is of unusual interest to us on account of its confusion with the name of the sect to which Jesus belonged who is usually called "Jesus the Nazarene" or "Nazarite." Commonly there is a distinction made between the words Nazarene and Nazarite by referring one to the sect of the Nazarenes and the other to the village of Nazareth. This explanation is quite ancient in Christian church history, but not pre-Christian,\* and is based on the invention of a village of Nazareth, unknown in the geography of Palestine, not only before and at the time of Jesus, but for centuries after him. However, as soon as the village En Naṣāra had been identified, for no other reason than a similarity

\* The words *Ναζαρηνός* and *Ναζωραῖος* are used interchangeably in the Gospels



THE VALLEY OF NAZARETH.



of sound, with Nazareth, the translation of "the Nazarite" as "he of Nazareth" became firmly established in the traditions of Christian theology, and this, too, in spite of the fact that the disciples of Jesus are called Nazarenes, and Paul "a ring-leader of the Nazarenes," though none of them was born in Nazareth. Moreover we must bear in mind that according to Mark ii. 1, Capernaum and not Nazareth was the home of Jesus.

The title on the cross of Christ in the Gospel according to John reads:

“*Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.*”

This can not mean "Jesus of Nazareth" but must mean "Jesus the Nazarene," for Nazareth, or rather the village En Naṣara did not belong to the jurisdiction of Pontius Pilate; on the other hand, if it meant an inhabitant of a town the definite article would scarcely have been applicable.

Whether the sect of the Nazarenes is a reorganization of the ancient Nazirs, or another movement of separatists, need not here be considered. They may have been (as Prof. W. B. Smith of Tulane University suggests)<sup>1</sup> salvationists, and it is not improbable that "Nazarene" meant Saviour and was used as a title.

Though the sibilants in Nazir and En Naṣara (i. e., Nazareth) and also in Nazarene are different, a fusion of the meaning into one conception is by no means excluded, because in the Greek transliteration both sounds, *ts* and *dz*, were changed into the Greek *z* (ξ).

Matthew (ii. 23) connects the name Nazarene with the verb *naṣar*<sup>2</sup> which means "to sprout," saying that Jesus shall be called a "Nazarene" because the prophet speaks of him as *neṣer*,<sup>3</sup> i. e., "a sprout" out of the roots of Jesse (Is. xi. 1).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. B. Smith, "The Meaning of the Epithet Nazarene," in *The Monist*, XV, p. 25. See also the author's pamphlet, *The Age of Christ*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> נָצַר

<sup>3</sup> נֶצֶר

The word Nazorean (or Nazarene) should, according to Professor Smith, be derived from the Aramaic word *natrona*,<sup>4</sup> corresponding to the Hebrew *naẕar-ya* which means "guardian" or "protector," and the use of the article, "Jesus *the* Nazarene," indicates that it is a title just as much as "Jesus the Saviour." Whether or not the title *ha naẕarya*, "the guardian" was identified in the time of Christ with the ancient Hebrew *ha nazir* is for our present purpose a matter of no concern. If it seems improbable on account of the difference of the sibilants, the one being *ts* or the German *z*, the other the English *dz*, it remains true that the two notions were soon, perhaps at the beginning of the Christian era and only among Gentile Christians, fused into one, and still later when the term Nazarene was no longer understood in its Greek transliteration, we meet with the assumption of the village of Nazareth which had never existed before.

#### THE NOMAD LIFE OF ISRAEL.

The invasion of Palestine by the Israelites is paralleled in other parts of Asia Minor, especially in Babylon. We know that the fertile plains of the two rivers were frequently inundated with Semitic tribes who by their numbers soon crowded out the native population. The founders of civilization in this part of the world, the Sumerians and Akkadians, appear to have succumbed in this way to immigrants who may first have appeared in their territory in little hordes, but grew soon so numerous as to supersede the aboriginal inhabitants, who as a separate nation had long disappeared from the face of the earth when our first historical records begin. Their language had been supplanted by Semitic dialects, and continued only in literature as a language of the learned that was kept up not

<sup>4</sup>The Aramaic *נ* ordinarily changes in the Hebrew to *ז* and the letter having the pronunciation of the German *z*, being the sharp *ts*, is here transcribed by a German *z*.

unlike Latin in the middle ages. The desert, and especially Arabia, was a breeding-place of nations. The nomads of the desert multiplied too freely for the scant resources of livelihood, and so they invaded the more fertile neighboring territories in large numbers again and again, which resulted in several consecutive conquests.

We must assume that the Israelites lived for a long time after the fashion of gypsies in Palestine, and the friction between them and both Canaanites and Philistines was but natural. Sometimes peace was established between the contending parties, and then these wandering nomads carried on a trade in sheep and goats and perhaps other goods among the more civilized old settlers of the country. But we can not doubt that frequently they were wronged and taken advantage of even by the established authorities, and must have had as many grudges against them as the modern gypsies may have against the white man's police. At the same time we know that just as the gypsy regards the world as his own which he has to take by theft or robbery, so the Semitic invaders regarded the country as a donation of their God Yahveh.

The nomad life of their ancestors was never fully forgotten in Israel, and the Rechabites, a tribe that kept up the old style of desert life, are praised by Jeremiah (xxxv) as especially acceptable to Yahveh,<sup>1</sup> and those pious Jews who in later days wished to live the ideal life of their ancestors, took a vow not to have their hair shorn, and called themselves Nazirs.

<sup>1</sup> For further details see the author's article "Yahveh and Manitou", *The Monist*, IX, p. 131.



## SAMSON'S LIFE.

### THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT.

THE story of Samson is recorded in the Book of Judges (xiv-xvi) and it is translated by Professor Moore in the *Polychrome Bible* as follows:

#### *Samson's Marriage and what Followed.*

Samson went down to Timnath, and saw there a woman of the Philistines. When he went home he told his father and mother: "I have seen at Timnath a woman of the Philistines; now, therefore, get her for me to be my wife." But his father [and his mother]<sup>1</sup> remonstrated with him: "Is there not a woman among the daughters of thy kinsmen, or in all my people, that thou must go and take a wife among those uncircumcised Philistines?"

But Samson answered his father: "Get this woman for me; she pleases me."

His father and mother did not know that this stirring was from JHVH, because He was seeking a grievance against the Philistines. [At that time the Philistines ruled

<sup>1</sup> The bracketed words are post-Exilic additions, according to Professor Moore.



over Israel.] So Samson went down, [with his father and mother,\*] to Timnath; and when [they] came to the



SAMSON AND THE LION.  
By Raphael.

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vineyards of Timnath, a fierce young lion came roaring toward him. And the spirit of JHVH came mightily upon

\* The story of the killing of the lion implies that Samson went down alone to his bride, which indicates that his father did not accompany him on the way.

him, and he tore the lion asunder as a man tears a kid; he had nothing whatever in his hands. [But he did not tell his father and mother what he had done.] Then he went down, and talked to the woman, and she was pleasing to Samson. When he returned, after a time, [to marry her,] he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and found a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. And he scraped out the honey into his hands, and went on, eating as he went, and came to his father and mother, and gave some to them, and they ate; but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey from the body of the lion. And [his father] went down to the woman; and Samson gave a feast there, for so bridegrooms used to do. And [when they saw him, they] took thirty comrades, and they were with him.<sup>2</sup>

And Samson said to them: "I will propound to you a riddle; if ye can tell me what it is, during the seven days that the feast lasts, [and find it out,] I will give you thirty fine robes and thirty festival dresses. And if ye cannot tell me, then ye shall give me thirty fine robes and thirty festival dresses."

They answered: "Propound your riddle, let us hear it!"

He said:

"Out of the eater came something to eat,  
And out of the strong came something sweet."

And they were not able to guess the riddle [for six days;] so [on the seventh day] they said to Samson's wife: "Cozen thy husband, and make him tell us the riddle, or we will burn thee and thy family. Didst thou invite us hither to impoverish us?"

<sup>2</sup> The only possible understanding of the present text is, that when the Philistines saw how formidable Samson was (or according to lxx, because they were afraid of him), they appointed thirty special guards to see that he did no mischief. In the original story, on the contrary, Samson chose thirty young Philistines as his companions to take the place which in an ordinary marriage would have been filled by his own kinsmen and friends.—G. F. Moore.

So Samson's wife hung on him with tears, and said:  
"Thou only hatest me, and dost not love me at all. Thou



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SAMSON'S MARRIAGE FEAST.  
By Rembrandt.

hast given a riddle to my countrymen, and hast not explained it to me."

He answered: "Lo, I have not told even my father and mother, and shall I tell thee?"

But she hung on him weeping the seven days that they kept the feast; and on the seventh day he told her, because she so beset him; and she told the riddle to her countrymen.

On the seventh day, before he entered the bridal chamber, the men of the town said to him: "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?"

He replied:

"If with my heifer ye did not plough,  
Ye had not found out my riddle, I trow."

*Then the Spirit of IHVH came mightily upon him and he went down to Ashkelon, and killed thirty of them, and took their spoil, and gave the festival dresses to those who had found out the riddle.<sup>4</sup>*

And he was very angry, and went away to his home. But Samson's bride was given to the comrade who had been his bridal companion.

After a time, at the season of wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife, taking with him a kid. But when he was about to go into the inner apartment to his wife her father said to him: "I thought that thou must certainly hate her, so I gave her to thy friend; but her younger sister is more beautiful than she; take her instead."

Then Samson said to them: "In this case I shall not be to blame if I do the Philistines an injury."

So Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took torches, and turned the foxes tail to tail, and fastened a torch between every pair of tails, and set fire to the torches, and turned the foxes loose among the Philistines'

<sup>4</sup>The italicized passage is considered by Professor Moore a later addition. It interrupts the context and could easily be omitted. Professor Moore says: "Ashkelon is two days journey from Timnath, on the sea-coast. It has been conjectured, with much plausibility, that this raid is the afterthought of an editor to whom it seemed unbecoming that Samson should run away without paying a wager. It has no consequences in the following story."



standing grain, and burned both the shock and the standing grain, [and the vineyards and olive trees].

When the Philistines inquired: "Who has done this?" they were told: "Samson, the Timnathite's son-in-law; because the Timnathite took Samson's wife, and gave her to Samson's friend."

Then the Philistines went up and burned her and her father's family.

And Samson said to them: "Since ye act thus, I swear I will be avenged on you; and after that, I will leave off."

So he smote them, hip and thigh, with great slaughter; and went down, and stayed in the cleft of the Cliff Etam.

Then the Philistines came up, and encamped in Judah, and made a raid upon Lehi. And when the people of Judah asked them: "Why have ye come up against us?" they said: "We have come to make Samson prisoner, to do to him as he has done to us."

So three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of Cliff Etam, and said to Samson: "Dost thou not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this that thou hast done to us?"

He replied: "As they did to me I have done to them."

Then they told him: "We have come down to make thee prisoner, and deliver thee to the Philistines;" and Samson said: "Swear to me that ye yourselves will not fall upon me."

They said: "No; but we will bind thee, and deliver thee to them; we will not put thee to death."

So they bound him with two new ropes, and brought him up from the Cliff.

Now when he reached Lehi the Philistines came to meet him with loud shouts, and the spirit of JHVH came mightily upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that has caught fire; his bonds melted from off his hands. And he found the fresh jaw-bone

of an ass, and reached out, and picked it up, and killed with it a thousand men. Then Samson said:

“With the jaw-bone of an ass  
I assailed my assailants;  
With the jaw-bone of an ass  
Have I slain a thousand men.”

After he had said this, he threw away the jaw-bone which he had in his hand; thus the place came to be called



SAMSON SLAYING THE PHILISTINES.

By Schnorr von Karolsfeld.

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Ramath-lehi. And he was very thirsty, and called to JHVH: “Thou hast given thy servant this great victory, and shall I now die of thirst, and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?”

Then God cleft The Mortar which is in Lehi, and water flowed from it; and he drank, and his spirits revived.

(Hence the spring, which is in Lehi to this day, got the name En-hakkore.)

Samson judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years.<sup>5</sup>

*Samson Carries off the Gates of Gaza.*

Thence Samson went down to Gaza, and saw there a harlot, and went in to her. When the Gazeans were told



SAMSON CARRIES OFF THE GATES OF GAZA.

4942

that Samson was come thither, [they went about, and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city, and] they kept still all night, saying: "Let us wait till the morning light, and then kill him."

But Samson lay till midnight; and then at midnight he rose, and laid hold of the doors of the city gate and the

<sup>5</sup> The indented passage is a Deuteronomic gloss.

two gate-posts, and pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the hill which is in front of Hebron.

*Samson and Delilah.*

After this, Samson fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

And the princes of the Philistines came to her, and said: "Cozen him, and find out what makes his strength so great, and how we can cope with him, and bind him, to overpower him; and we, on our part, will each give thee eleven hundred shekels of silver."

So Delilah asked Samson: "Tell me, I pray thee, what makes thy strength so great, and how couldst thou be bound to overpower thee?"

Samson answered: "If men should bind me with seven new bowstrings which have not been dried, my strength would leave me, and I should be like any other man."

Then the princes of the Philistines brought her seven new bowstrings which had not been dried, and she bound him with them. She had the men waiting in concealment in the inner apartment. Then she said to him: "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" But he snapped the bowstrings as a strand of tow snaps at the breath of fire; so the secret of his strength was not discovered.

Thereupon Delilah said to Samson: "Lo, thou hast cheated me, and told me falsehoods; now tell me wherewith thou canst be bound."

He answered: "If men should bind me fast with new ropes wherewith no work has been done, my strength would leave me, and I should be like any other man."

So Delilah took new ropes, and bound him with them; and said to him: "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" (Now the men were lying in wait in the inner apartment.) But he snapped the ropes off from his arms like thread.



Then Delilah said to Samson: "Hitherto thou hast cheated me, and told me falsehoods; tell me wherewith thou canst be bound."



SAMSON AND DELILAH.  
By Doré.

4972

And he said to her: "If thou shouldst weave the seven braids of my hair into the web, and beat it up with the pin,

my strength would leave me, and I should be like any other man."

So while he was asleep Delilah took the seven braids of his hair, and wove them into the web, and beat it up with the pin. Then she said to him: "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" And he started from his sleep, and pulled up the loom with the web.



DELILAH'S TREACHERY.  
By Schnorr von Karolsfeld.

5047

Then she said to him: "How canst thou say: 'I love thee,' when thou dost not confide in me? Three times now thou hast cheated me, and hast not told me what makes thy strength so great."

And as she beset him every day with her importunities, and pressed him hard, he grew tired to death of it, and

told her his whole secret; and said to her: "A razor has never come near my head, for from my birth I have been a religious votary; if my head were shaved, my strength would depart from me, and I should become weak, and like the rest of men."

When Delilah saw that he had told her his whole secret, she sent a message, and summoned the princes of the Philistines, saying: "Come, this once; for he has told me his whole secret." So the princes of the Philistines came to her, bringing the money with them.

And she put Samson to sleep in her lap, and called a man who shaved off the seven braids of his hair; and he began to be brought under, and his strength departed from him. Then she said: "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" and he awoke from his sleep, and said to himself: "I shall get off as I have done time and time again, and shake myself free;" for he did not know that JHVH had departed from him.

Then the Philistines seized him and bored out his eyes, and took him down to Gaza, and made him fast with shackles, and he was set to turning the mill in the prison. But his hair began to grow again after it had been shaved off.

The princes of the Philistines came together at Gaza to offer a sacrifice to their god Dagon, and to hold festivities; for they said: "Our god has given our enemy, Samson, into our power."

And when the people saw him they set up a shout in honor of their god; for they said: "Our god has given into our power our enemy, who devastated our fields, and slew many of us." And when they were in high spirits, they commanded: "Call Samson, that he may make sport for us." So they called Samson from the prison, and he made sport before them.

And they placed him between the columns. Then Sam-





"MADE FAST WITH SHACKLES."

By Max Klein,



son said to the attendant who led him by the hand: "Place me where I can feel the columns by which the house is supported, that I may lean against them."



SAMSON'S DEATH  
By Doré.

4971

Now the house was full of the men and women; and all the princes of the Philistines were there; [while on the

roof were about three thousand men and women,] who were looking on while Samson made sport.

Then Samson prayed to JHVH: "O Lord JHVH, remember me, I beseech Thee, and give me strength only this once, O God, that I may avenge myself on the Philistines for one of my two eyes."

Then Samson grasped the two middle columns by which the house was supported, and leaned his weight upon them, one with his right hand and the other with his left. And Samson said: "Let me die with the Philistines."

Then he bowed with all his might, and the house fell on the princes and on all the people that were in it; so that those whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life. His brothers and all his father's family came down and took him up, and went up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the tomb of his father Manoah. [He had judged Israel twenty years.]



1273

## SAMSON'S ADVENTURES.

### THE TWELVE LABORS.

ACCORDING to Dr. Gustav Roskoff (*loc. cit.*, pp. 22-30) the twelve labors of Samson are as follows:

1. He kills a lion with his hands. It is characteristic of Samson as well as of Izdubar, the Babylonian solar hero, and also of Heracles, that the lion is slain without the use of any weapon.

2. At his marriage at Timnath he proposes a riddle, and incidentally slays thirty Philistines at Ascalon.

3. He catches three hundred foxes and chases them with firebrands through the fields of the Philistines.

4. The Philistines burn his wife and his father-in-law's whole family which induces him to make great slaughter among them, whereupon he flees into the mountains of Judah and hides in the cleft of the Cliff Etam.

5. Samson is bound by the men of Judah and delivered to the Philistines who take him to Lehi, but "the ropes on his arms became like flax that has caught fire."

6. Samson picks up the jawbone of an ass and kills multitudes of his enemies.

7. Being overcome with thirst he prays for water and a spring breaks forth from the ass's jawbone.

8. When visiting a woman at Gaza, he escapes the ambush of the Philistines by rising at midnight and carrying with him the two doors of the city gate, which he plants upon the hill which is in front of Hebron.

9. Now he became entangled with Delilah. The treacherous woman bound him with seven new bowstrings, but when the Philistines came upon him "he snapped the bowstrings as a strand of tow snaps at the breath of fire."

10. Thereupon Delilah bound him with seven new ropes, but he "snapped the ropes off from his arms like thread."

11. Delilah weaves the seven braids of his hair into the web of her loom, but he pulled up the loom with the web and escaped the third time.

12. Finally Samson betrays the secret of his strength, and Delilah had the seven braids of his hair shaved; he was taken prisoner and blinded. But when his hair had grown again his strength returned and enabled him to break down the two pillars of the Dagon temple by which deed he buried himself with multitudes of his enemies under the ruins of the edifice.

We do not lay much stress upon this division of Samson's career into twelve adventures which would make their number agree with the twelve labors of Heracles and the twelve months of the year, but it is remarkable enough that this proposition is made by Roskoff who is so conservative as to be the main authority for the historicity of the Samson story.

#### THE LION AND THE BEE.

Some features of Samson's adventures are noteworthy. The lion symbolizes the heat of the sun and is but another symbol of the sun-god himself, but the mollification of the solar heat is attributed to the sun-god, and so he is celebrated as the slayer of the lion.



The riddle concerning the honey in the carcass of the lion has proved a puzzle to all who still believe in literal inspiration. Bees will never make their habitation in dead animals and the form of the riddle indicates that the text has been greatly corrupted. The riddle is not a question but a statement—a positive proposition. It reads:

“Out of the eater comes something to eat;  
And out of the sour<sup>1</sup> one comes something sweet.”

And the answer is stated in the form of a question, thus:



MITHRAIC PLAQUE.<sup>2</sup>

“What is sweeter than honey, and  
What is more sour<sup>1</sup> than a lion?”

It can only be regarded as a solution by doing violence to the meaning. The connection between the bee and the lion must have been known to the audience to whom the riddle was proposed, and so the very impossibility of the fact as a real event of life must have added to the interest of the solution.

There is an ancient Mithraic plaque representing a lion with a bee in his mouth and the simple explanation of it may be nothing more nor less than that the bees pro-

<sup>1</sup>“Sour” or “strong.”

<sup>2</sup>The obverse of the medal shows Mithra between Castor and Pollux; above his head the raven and other Mithraic symbols. Underneath, the altar with the sacramental bread, the cup of the eucharist, the fish, the dove, etc. The reverse shows in the center a lion with a bee in his mouth. He is surrounded by seven stars with illegible inscriptions.

duce honey in the lion, i. e., the month when the sun stands in the sign of Leo. Thus it would be quite plausible for an ancient riddle to propound the paradox, "When or where can honey be found in a lion?" And the answer, alluding to the deed of the sun-god, would be: "In the month of the slain lion." Accordingly the strange thing comes to pass that

"Out of the eater comes something to eat;  
And out of the sour one comes something sweet."

That the original meaning of the riddle has been obliterated in the Samson story is but natural when we consider the redactor's tendency to cut out mythological references.

#### THE FOXES WITH FIREBRANDS.

The story of the three hundred foxes appears in its true light when we consider it as a parallel to the Roman custom of chasing foxes with firebrands through the circus on the festival of Ceres, an ancient patrician ceremony which, however, was so popular that it had been customary for the plebeians to take part in it as guests. On the main day (according to Preller, April 19) small gifts were thrown among the crowds, usually eatables, among which nuts are specially mentioned. There were no horse races, but red foxes with firebrands tied to their tails were chased through the arena. It is understood that they signified the cereal disease of robigo, for the word means "red fox," as well as the red blight of wheat.

Ovid (*Festi* IV, 679 f.) tells the story of a peasant of Carseoli which is intended to explain the origin of the custom. A rustic couple had a son of about twelve years who caught a fox that had frequently stolen hens. The boy wrapped him in straw and hay and set fire to it. The

fox managed to escape and retreated into the wheat fields, igniting the whole harvest. Thereupon a law was passed that every captured fox should be killed and the foxes were punished in the Cerealia as above mentioned.<sup>3</sup>

We cannot doubt that this coincidence between Samson's foxes with fire-brands and their Roman counterparts is not accidental, but both are distant echoes of a most primitive notion which in other parts of the world has been lost.

#### SEMELE AND DIDO.

It is not uncommon in ancient mythology for brides of solar heroes to be burned in fire; so Semele, illustrated p. 116, dies in the awful presence of Zeus. And if Samson's wife is burned together with her father's family, it is quite in keeping with the general character of our myth however improbable it might be in a historical story.

We have repeatedly mentioned Æneas as one of the solar heroes, and will say that evidence of his character is found not only in the fact that he is the son of Venus, nor in his migration over the whole world, nor alone in his descent into Orcus, the realm of the dead, but also in that particular incident of having a bride who dies in the fire as a holocaust. When Æneas comes to Carthage he falls in love with Dido, but at a divine command he leaves her, which causes her in her despair to commit suicide, and burn herself on the pyre as a victim of her love.

Virgil's version of the death of Dido is a comparatively late modification of an older legend, alluded to by the historian Timæus and by Justinus,<sup>1</sup> according to which Dido

<sup>3</sup> For detailed references and further information of kindred practices especially the worship of Robigo in the grove of Robigo, also the Bæotian story of the dog Kephalos and the Teumessian fox, and the Roman custom of sacrificing young dogs of red color at the time of the dog-star on the road to Nomentum, see L. Preller's *Römische Mythologie*, 3rd edition by H. Jordan, Berlin, 1883, Vol. II, pp. 43 ff.

<sup>1</sup> *Fragm. Hist. Gr.*, ed. Mueller, I, 197; and Justinus XVIII, 6. Compare W. R. Smith's *Religion of the Semites*, (London, 1901), p. 374.



DIDO ON THE PYRE.  
By Ferd. Keller.



sacrifices herself for her husband Sicharbas. Prof. G. Hoffmann (in his *Phœnicische Inschriften*, p. 32 f.) points out that she is the goddess Tanith, the consort of Baal, and the word Sicharbas is the Phœnician *Sichar baal*. The word *Sichar* corresponds to the Hebrew *dzecher*<sup>2</sup> which means "commemoration."

There is a whole class of legends on solar brides of which the story of Semiramis is typical. Like all these fantastic traditions, it is a myth that has been localized and by being transferred to an historical person changed into saga. The original form of the myth is still preserved in the tales of the death of Astarte at Aphaca and the suicide of Aphrodite, who after the death of Adonis threw herself down from the Leucadian promontory.<sup>3</sup>

#### SAMSON IN HIDING.

Steinthal calls attention to the fact that Apollo after having slain the dragon seeks refuge in flight, and Indra does the same after he has slain the monster Vritra. He also maintains that El, the highest Semitic God, must hide, and in the Samson legend we read that the hero in spite of his great victory over the Philistines flies and hides in the cleft at Etam (Chap. xv. 8). Steinthal regards this *motif* as a common trait of solar legends and explains it as due to the observation that after a storm which appears to be like a struggle between two powers of nature, a calm sets in, and this calm is interpreted to mean that the hero after his victory, retires and hides in some cleft or cave.

Steinthal's explanation does not appeal to us. Like some other theories of his it is far-fetched, and even if he were right, we think that in the Samson legend his

<sup>2</sup> זִכָּר

<sup>3</sup> Ptol. *Nov. Hist.*, VII, p. 198. Cf. W. R. Smith's *Religion of the Semites*, p. 375.

hiding is not, as Steinthal claims, without sufficient motive. The Philistines were the masters of the country, and it was but the duty of the authorities to search for the bold murderer who, without sufficient provocation, had slain thirty men at Ascalon and still continued by indiscriminate slaughter to make the highways unsafe. The fact, however, remains that Samson hides—an event which is not uncommon in the career of solar heroes.

We must assume that when the Samson story reached its final form, the solar character of the hero had already been lost sight of, and so we can not expect that the details of Samson's adventures should be parallel to definite phenomena in the sun's course. But if we seek for an explanation of Samson's hiding, we would suggest that the sun hides behind the clouds, and the event takes place after an unusual heat, which means that the sun-god has emptied his quiver of arrows against his enemies. We note further that the hidden sun-god is supposed to be vanquished by his pursuers, but he bursts out on them with unexpected ferocity in a thunderstorm, and it is peculiar that in this special instance the sun-god is identified with the god of thunderstorms, a peculiarity which is most assuredly verified in the Samson legend, for when Samson is taken prisoner by the Philistines, he picks up the jaw-bone of an ass and slays a thousand of his foes.

#### THE JAW-BONE OF AN ASS.

The story of the jaw-bone of the ass has been localized, and it appears that a certain rock formation has been called *Ramath-Lehi*, i. e., "The Hill of the Jaw-Bone." The Hebrew narrator changes it to *Ramah Lehi* which means "he threw away the jaw-bone," saying that here Samson dropped his weapon.

It is noteworthy that the name "ass's jaw-bone" in

Greek (i. e., *Onugnathos*<sup>1</sup>) is given to a promontory at the southern end of Laconia as Strabo informs us, (VIII, 5, I, p. 353), and we may assume that here, too, the name refers to the deed of some ancient hero now forgotten.

Jaw-bones, and especially the jaw-bones of asses (for



PERSEUS WITH MEDUSA'S HEAD.

4957

horses were not yet domesticated) were used in the paleolithic ages as weapons, and their form seems to have been retained for a while in the age of bronze, before the invention of the sword; for it is not improbable that the so-called "sickle-sword" of the ancient dragon-killers Bel

<sup>1</sup> ονούγναθος.

Merodach and Perseus is but the primitive jaw-bone weapon made of bronze.

In the ancient bas-reliefs Bel Merodach makes his onslaught on Tiamat with thunderbolts, while a falchion (from the Latin *falx* i. e. sickle) dangles down on his back.



BEL MERODACH FIGHTING TIAMAT WITH SICKLE SWORD.



BEL MERODACH FIGHTING TIAMAT WITH THUNDERBOLTS. 2607

In Table IV of the Creation story this falchion or sickle sword is expressly mentioned in lines 35 ff. where the armament of the god is described. The passage in question reads as follows:\*

\* Compare the author's article "The Fairy Tale Element in the Bible," *The Monist*, XI, 405, 500.



"He made ready a bow,  
 Prepared it for a weapon,  
 He armed himself with a falchion,  
 Attaching it [to his belt] ;  
 He took the god-weapon,<sup>3</sup>  
 His right hand seizing it.  
 Bow and quiver,  
 He hung at his side.  
 He caused a lightning-flash  
 To precede him,  
 Whose interior he filled  
 With shooting flames."



KRONOS WITH A SICKLE-SWORD.    SILVANUS WITH SICKLE.    5326

When speaking of sickle-swords we must consider that the ancient sickle was shaped exactly like a jaw-bone as may be seen for instance in the ancient representations of Silvanus whose common symbols are a sickle and a cypress branch. Later on both sickles and sickle-swords are replaced by instruments bearing the shape of a modern sickle.

<sup>3</sup> Presumably lightning.

Kronos, the most ancient among the gods, is also represented with a sickle-sword in his hand, and in the more



WATER FLOWING FROM THE JAW-BONE.

By Guido Reni.

5023

archaic statues this sickle-sword, too, bears a strong resemblance to the ass's jaw-bone. If these data can be

relied upon, we may fairly well assume that among some of the primitive folks, the sun-god's weapon was an ass's jaw-bone which accordingly would have to be identified with the thunderbolt.

Our explanation is further verified by one significant detail of the story which associates the jaw-bone closely with gushing waters. If the jaw-bone is the thunderbolt, we must expect that after its use there will be rain, and Guido Reni with his fine artistic sentiment still feels this interpretation when in his picture of Samson quenching his thirst from the drink that came from the jaw-bone he represents the water as rushing down from above, the hero holding the jaw-bone high above his head.

The Biblical story tells us of a fervid prayer of Samson which, being poetical in its wording, may be a quotation from an older version. But we may well assume that according to the ancient interpretation it must be regarded not in our modern sense of an orison but as a magic spell.

When the legend was localized, a spring in the hollow place of the Rock of the Jaw-bone was pointed out as the water which had come forth in answer to the prayer of the exhausted hero.

Diodorus Siculus (IV, 22) tells us that when Heracles wandered from Pelorias to Eryx, the nymphs on the road made the warm springs Himerea and Egestæa gush forth for his refreshment.

Before we proceed we will mention that Samson's shout of triumph concerning his successful slaughter contains a pun which renders the original almost untranslatable. The word *khamor* means both "ass" and "heap," and he exclaims at the height of his triumph:

בָּרַחַי בַּחֲמֹר  
 חֲמֹר בַּמִּדְבָּר  
 בָּרַחַי בַּחֲמֹר  
 הָרַחֵי אֵלַי אִישׁ

“With the jaw-bone of the *khamor* (ass)  
 A *khamor* (heap), two *khamors* (heaps)  
 With the jaw-bone of the *khamor* (ass)  
 I slew a thousand men.”

It is interesting to see how translators have tried to reproduce the pun. A German scholar, E. Meier, translates as follows:

“Mit dem *Backen* des *Packesels*  
 Ein *Pack*, zwei *Pack*,  
 Mit dem *Backen* des *Packesels*  
 Erschlug ich tausend Mann.”

Professor G. F. Moore in the translation in the *Polychrome Bible*, translates the same passage very ingeniously as follows:

“With the jaw-bone of an *ass*  
 I assailed my *assailants*,<sup>5</sup>  
 With the jaw-bone of an *ass*  
 Have I slain a thousand men.”

The well is called *en haqqore*,<sup>6</sup> the “spring of the crier,” which latter means “partridge” and is also an epithet of the ass. His formidable braying is considered prophetic in folklore traditions, and this belief is extended to the neighing of the horse, an animal which supplants the ass though it does not appear in the history of the Orient until later. We remember that according to Herodotus, Darius was created king on account of the neighing of his horse. In Bible folklore, Balaam’s she-ass was endowed with the gift of prophecy and there are scattered traditions still extant which prove that Yahveh as well as the war god Seth of the Semitic invaders in lower Egypt was ass-headed.

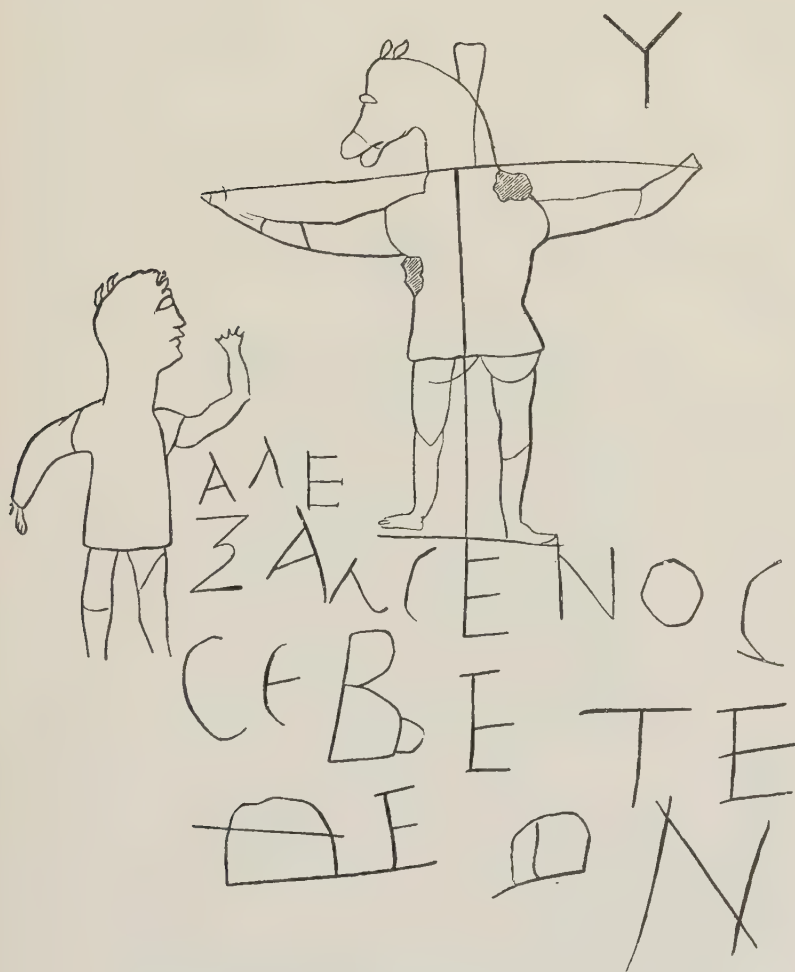
<sup>5</sup> The first and second lines would be more literal as follows:

“With the jaw-bone of an *ass*  
 I’m massing them in masses.”

<sup>6</sup> הַקִּירוֹר The word is also transliterated *hakkore*; but the k-sound is sharp and is commonly transcribed *q*.



A remarkable scrawl on the walls of the ancient Cæsarian palace on Mount Palatine has been discovered which represents an ass-headed deity on the cross, commonly as-



DONKEY-HEADED GOD ON THE CROSS.

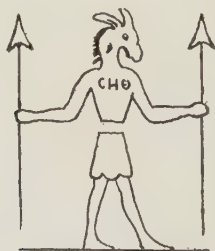
Commonly called "Spotcrucifix."

462

sumed to be drawn in ridicule of the slave Alexamenos whose inscription it bears; hence the name "*Spotcrucifix*" from the German *spotten*, "to scoff." However, in con-

nection with leaden tablets containing incantations and curses which show similar pictures of ass-headed deities, it has become probable that the "Spottcrucifix" was seriously meant and represents the faith of the pagan-Christian sect of Sethites. Tacitus (*Hist.* V, 4) informs us that the Jews worshiped the ass, and Epiphanius quotes the genealogy of Mary in which the God of the Jews is spoken of as ass-headed, not in derision, but as a matter of fact.

Prof. W. Robertson Smith makes the following comments on the ass as a sacrificial animal among the Semites:<sup>7</sup>



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SETH.



SETH AND ANUBIS.

450

"The wild ass was eaten by the Arabs, and must have been eaten with a religious intention, since its flesh was forbidden to his converts by Simeon the Stylite. Conversely, among the Harranians the ass was forbidden food, like the swine and the dog; but there is no evidence that, like these animals, it was sacrificed or eaten in exceptional mysteries. Yet when we find one section of Semites forbidden to eat the ass, while another section eats it in a way which to Christians appears idolatrous, the presumption that the animal was anciently sacred becomes very strong. An actual ass-sacrifice appears in Egypt in the worship of Typhon (Set or Sutech), who was the chief god of the

<sup>7</sup> *The Religion of the Semites*, (1901), p. 468.

Semites in Egypt, though Egyptologists doubt whether he was originally a Semitic god. The ass was a Typhonic animal and in certain religious ceremonies the people of Coptus sacrificed asses by casting them down a precipice, while those of Lycopolis, in two of their annual feasts, stamped the figure of a bound ass on their sacrificial cakes (Plut., *Is. et Os.* § 30)."

"The old clan-name Hamor ("he-ass") among the Canaanites in Shechem, seems to confirm the view that the



DIONYSUS ON THE ASS.  
Antique terra cotta of Attica.

2709

ass was sacred with some of the Semites; and the fables of ass-worship among the Jews (on which compare Bochart, *Hieroicoicon*, I. ii. 18) probably took their rise, like so many other false statements of a similar kind in a confusion between the Jews and their heathen neighbors."

The ass was sacred to Dionysus who is represented in many antique pictures and bas reliefs as coming to mankind surrounded by his merry followers riding on a donkey.

The same trait is also, and not without special emphasis, told of Christ's triumphal entrance into Jerusalem.

In the Christian church of Southern France in mediæval times the ass was treated with particular regard and a special mass was celebrated in his honor. Instead of



CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

4940

saying Amen the congregation brayed the responses, and at the end a hymn was sung which begins with the words:

"Orientis partibus  
Adventavit Asinus."<sup>8</sup>

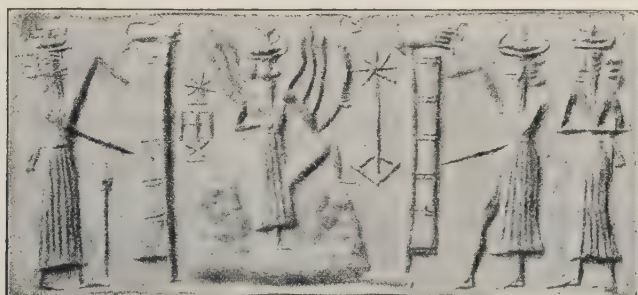
<sup>8</sup> For details see the author's article on "Anubis, Seth, and Christ, the Significance of the Spotcrucifix," *The Open Court*, XV, 65 ff.



There are many ancient scrawls extant in which a donkey-headed deity is represented. The ass or the crier was (according to Plutarch) sacred to Seth on account of the reddish color which is common in the Oriental species.

#### THE GATES OF GAZA.

It is an ancient Babylonian notion that the sun-god enters the inhabited world in the morning through two



THE GATES OF HEAVEN OPENED TO SHAMASH.

2025



THE BABYLONIAN PROTOTYPE OF THE PILLARS OF HERACLES. 2037

pillars which accordingly are erected in every Semitic temple. Even in the temple at Jerusalem the two brazen pillars were never missing, although their meaning had in later times been entirely lost sight of. To Phœnician sailors it was quite natural that the two rocks at the strait

of Gibraltar should be considered as the two pillars of Melkarth through which the sun was supposed to pass on his descent into the underworld. It is again Diodorus who tells us (IV, 3) that Heracles put up the two mountains at the end of the Mediterranean which have, accordingly, been called after him the "Pillars of Hercules," down to Tarik's time,<sup>1</sup> and should the question arise, How is it possible that the two pillars in the east are found also in the west, or that the pillars in the west should also be found in the east, the answer suggests itself that in the night the sun-god had carried them from one place to the other. In this way Samson's peculiarly unpractical joke finds a natural explanation, if regarded as a mythical event.

#### THE WEB OF DELILAH.

The accounts that Samson was bound and that he freed himself as if by the heat of fire are easily explained as incidents of a solar myth. Nature is ice-bound in winter, but with the awakening of spring the fetters melt away. The binding is repeated, for during the fall months the inroads of winter become more and more serious. The hero frees himself three times before he is permanently fettered.

When Delilah tried to bind her lover, Samson said to her: "If thou shouldst weave the seven braids of my hair into the web and beat it up with the pin my strength would leave me." And she applied this method, but Samson "pulled up the loom with the web"—and we may add that Delilah's web was torn and flew all over the fields. If we remember that Delilah (like Samson) is a mythical figure and that the threads of her loom are to be woven into the rays of the sun, we shall at once find the proper explanation of the web which can be nothing else than the

<sup>1</sup> The present name *Gebr al Tarik*, or Gibraltar, means "Rock of Tarik."

gossamer of autumn. Gossamer is also called Mary's yarn, and though the original meaning of the word is lost, we still know, that it has something to do with the web of some pagan goddess, or fairy. When the gossamer flies over the field we know that winter is near. It is the last snare that the sun-god has broken and torn to tatters. The enchantress will now shear his locks and then his strength will be gone.

#### SAMSON'S SEVEN BRAIDS.

Nothing can be more suggestive of Samson's solar character than the loss of his strength. The hair of the



SUN-GOD WITH SEVEN-RAYED HALO.

Mithraic Monument and Etruscan Wall-Painting.

sun-god is commonly interpreted to be the rays of light that surround the sun, and Apollo is called by Homer (II, XX, 39) "he of unshorn hair," which translated into Hebrew would mean the Nazir. Samson's hair is put up in seven braids in the style of the sun-god who in one of the Mithraic monuments (reproduced by Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, p. 202) is represented with seven rays, characterizing the mysterious power of the seven planetary gods. The loss of Samson's strength is due to the

fact that he is deprived of his hair. The name of the traitress Delilah is symbolical and means "the weakening or debilitating one." Finally Samson is blinded, (the sun loses his light), and when he dies he stands between the two pillars of sunset, at Gaza, the most western city in Danite geography.

#### THE ONE-EYED ONE.

We know that the German god Wodan had one eye only, because there is only one sun in the heavens, and we are told in Teutonic mythology that Wodan had pawned his other eye to Mimer, the god of water. The second eye of Wodan is the reflection of the sun in the ocean. In consideration of the fact that the sun is the one-eyed god, it is noteworthy that the dying Samson exclaims: "I will avenge myself on the Philistines for one of my two eyes." The authorized version ignores this feature and translates "for my two eyes," and the current interpretation of Hebrew scholars (as stated by Professor Moore in the Polychrome Bible) is the idea that "the destruction of all these Philistines could be but a partial retaliation" which, if this interpretation were admissible, would only add to the unsatisfactory character of the conclusion of the Samson story. We believe that the original story knew a reason why Samson was one-eyed and the last prayer of Samson, which is a piece of poetry, must be regarded as a quotation from an ancient epic representing a more primitive tradition. Samson's prayer reads as follows:

"Adonai Yahveh	אֲדֹנָי יְהוֹה
Remember me	זְכֹרֵנִי יָא
And strengthen me.	וְיַחֲזֵקֵנִי יָא
Yea! once more now;	אָן הַשֵּׁעַם בְּהַעַ
Elohim!	הָאֱלֹהִים



And I wreak vengeance  
For one of my two eyes  
On the Philistines."

וְאֶנְקָמָה נִקֵּם  
אַחַת מִיְּשָׁרַי עֵינַי  
מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים:

The poetical fervor of this passage, especially the rhyme, *Zakreni na ve hazqeni na*, so rare in Hebrew literature, has been most happily imitated by E. Meyer, whose version runs thus:



SAMSON'S DEATH.

5049

By Schnorr von Karolsfeld.

"O merke mich doch,  
Und stärke mich doch  
Nur diesmal noch,  
O du mein Gott!  
Damit ich nehme  
Auf einmal Rache  
Für meine zwei Augen  
An den Philistern!"

It is, however, barely permissible for Meyer to translate the word **כָּל־בְּעֵצָה** which means "one," by *auf einmal* in the sense of "all at once" whereby he avoids the difficulty of a literal rendering, implying that Samson takes revenge "for one of his two eyes."

#### SAMSON'S DEATH.

The death of Heracles and also of Melkarth is represented as a suicide which is regarded as a self-sacrifice, and the same is true of Samson. He goes to death voluntarily, breaking down the temple of Dagon with the intention of slaying with him a great number of the oppressors of his people. He knew that the edifice was filled with the lords of the Philistines, and it is expressly stated that on the roof alone there were three thousand men and women. The tacit implication is that the Philistines were weakened to such an extent that although the Israelites had not been freed, the Gentile authorities could no longer suppress them as mightily as before, and so it was fulfilled that Samson should "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."



4212

## SOLAR MYTHS.

### MYTHICAL TRAITS OF THE SAMSON STORY.

ONE reason which suggests the idea that in the Samson myth we are confronted with a relic of some ancient pagan tradition, is found in the obvious and undeniable discrepancy of the general character and tone of the story with the puritan spirit of later Judaism that otherwise prevails in the Old Testament.

The story of Samson is neither refined nor moral, so that even orthodox people will have to confess that it is out of harmony with the general tenor of Biblical traditions. It is full of boisterous fun, and a critical reader feels that the Deuteronomic redactor of the Bible was obviously too sober and too serious to appreciate its humor. But the story appears to have been too popular among the Israelites to be overlooked or suppressed by the priestly censors who had to admit it to the canon, and they may have suffered it mainly on account of the religious background which, though tinged with old superstitions, exhibits confidence in the power of Yahveh.

Some adventures (the story of the foxes and the repeated slaughter of Philistines) indicate that the tale originated among herdsmen who were hostile to the farmers of the country and also full of spite against the established

authorities. The style, though vigorous and poetical, is at times positively vulgar, and the puns (*Ramath Lehi*, *haqqore*, and *khamor*) are poor.

While the hero's character is objectionable for more than one reason and can scarcely be considered religious, assuredly not moral, the rôle of Yahveh in the story indicates that according to the people among whom the tale was current he was not a great and dignified God, and still less the creator and ruler of the world; but a kind of demon, or occult power or spell that, not unlike the genii of Aladdin, obeyed certain magic tricks. Yahveh comes over Samson in fits just as an attack of frenzy seizes Heracles, or as a blind fury takes possession of the Northern berserker; and in this condition the hero becomes miraculously irresistible. When Samson's locks are shorn, Yahveh no longer comes over him, just as the genii cease to appear when a wrong lamp is substituted for the magic lamp. The external and magical cause of Yahveh's appearance is so out of place in a book which has been edited by the priests of a purified monotheism, that it is impossible to judge the story from any other point of view except that it is saturated with pagan traditions.

#### THE NUMBERS SEVEN, THIRTY, AND TWELVE.

The ancient Hebrews were not of a mathematical turn of mind, and so the significance of numbers, so well understood in Babylon, was little heeded in Palestine. The more noteworthy is the preservation of such figures as thirty, the number of days in a month, and seven the number of days in a week, which occur repeatedly in our narrative. There are thirty comrades given to Samson at his wedding, the wager of the riddle is for thirty fine dresses, and he kills thirty Philistines at Ascalon.



Further Delilah has Samson bound with seven bow-strings, and he wears seven braids of hair.

That Samson's adventures can be classed in a group of twelve, as Roskoff has done, is noteworthy but may

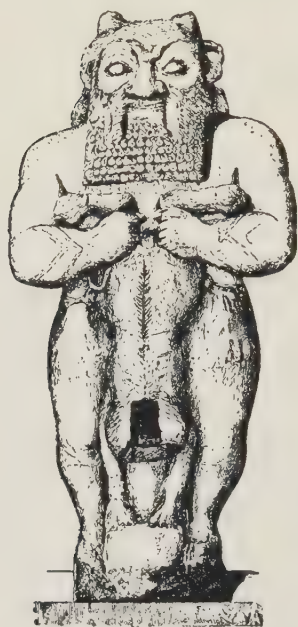


THE TWELVE LABORS OF HERACLES,

be accidental, and so this point is too uncertain to be used as an argument.

The number twelve is of a general significance in the Orient and occurs in many similar connections. There

are twelve tribes of the children of Israel, and the number in the enumerations is constant although the names are not always the same. The tribe of Dan is sometimes replaced by another name. There are twelve prophets and twelve disciples of Christ. The zodiac is divided into twelve signs, and the day is measured by twelve double-hours. The sacredness of the number twelve is due, partly to its arithmetical advantages, viz., its divisibility by two,



MELKARTH OF THE  
PHOENICIANS.



DEATH TAKING AWAY SEMELE  
WITH THE THUNDERBOLT  
OF ZEUS.  
Etruscan glass.



HERACLES ENTERING THE  
DRAGON.

three and four, and undoubtedly also to the fact that twelve is the number of months in the year. For this reason the recurrent events of the year have naturally been conceived as twelve adventures of the solar hero. But the farther a story travels the more do the people lose sight of its original significance, and so the deeds of Heracles reflect no longer the sun's work in the successive months of the

year. The myth has changed into a loosely interconnected series of incidents and deeds of valor; and the same is true of Samson. Local coloring (perhaps real events of actual men) overgrows the original myth and modifies it until it loses its mythological character and becomes saga or legend.

#### THE LION AND THE DRAGON.

Among the twelve labors of Heracles we have one, consisting in the killing of a lion, which is common to all



LION-KILLING HERO OF KHORSABAD.

1366

solar heroes of the Semites; and it is certainly not accidental that the Tyrian Melkarth and the Babylonian Izdubar are represented as tearing a lion in two and killing him without a weapon, merely with their hands, just as Samson does in the Biblical story. In Greece the lion's skin is the typical dress of Heracles.

Northern solar heroes fight a monster or a dragon, the symbol of swamps and fogs. This is instanced in the Beowulf legend, in the Siegfried Story, and in the fight of Thor with the serpent Jörmungander. But in the Samson

story the fight with a dragon is missing, which may be regarded as an evidence of its ancient date. It is an indication that the Biblical tale is purely Semitic and uninfluenced by Aryan thought.

The Greek Heracles may originally have been an Aryan solar hero, a Siegfried, whose character was modified by the importation of Semitic features; or he may have



SIEGFRIED AND THE DRAGON.

4409

been the Semitic solar hero who became thoroughly Hellenized in Greece. Every one of these solar heroes has become a typical exponent of the nation to which he belongs, and so Samson remains a genuine Hebrew figure, yet he typifies the archaic and prehistoric age, not the more civilized period of later Judaism with its purer faith and higher morality.

As Heracles is (or has become) a typical Greek hero,



so the story of Samson has been thoroughly localized among the Israelites, and we may assume that it was aboriginal, but if not, it must have been imported at a very early date. It must have been told centuries before Hammurabi and thus it is quite natural that the connection of the legend with Babylonian myths was completely forgotten.

It is characteristic that while Heracles, the hero of a cosmopolitan nation, is regarded as the saviour of mankind who travels all over the inhabited earth, Samson is the saviour only of the tribe of Dan, and all his deeds are accomplished within the small radius of the tribe's political horizon. He is born in Zorah and he dies in Gaza.

#### HERCULES AND HERACLES.

It may not be out of place to mention that the Italian Hercules has, under the influence of a similarity of sound, been erroneously identified with Heracles, and this mistaken identification has been so firmly established that in all English-speaking countries even to-day, Heracles is scarcely known under any other name than that of Hercules. Yet the Italian Hercules has little in common with the Greek Heracles, for the former is a boundary deity, the name being connected with the root *HARK*, still found in the Greek *herkos* (*ἔρκος*) "fence." The rural character of this Italian Hercules bore a faint resemblance to the rude jocularity of the Greek Heracles, a feature which is also quite conspicuous in Samson as well as other solar heroes. Since the Romans had scarcely any written folklore traditions the more definite and therefore stronger Greek mythology which had been grafted upon the ancient Italian religion, almost obliterated its primitive Italian traditions, and so Hercules lost his original characteristics except in the rural districts, and was changed into the Greek Heracles.

## IZDUBAR THE HELPER.

We do not know whether Samson has ever been revered as a demigod among the Israelites, as a protector against enemies and evils of all kind. We can only say that it is probable, for all traces of it except the narrative as told in the Book of Judges, are lost.

Izdubar (like the Greek Heracles) is considered as a helper in trouble. One of the fragments (catalogued No. 1371 by Smith and published by Haupt in his *Nimrod-epos*, fascicle II, page 93) contains a prayer to Izdubar in the capacity of a god who figures as assistant to the sun-god. His name was invoked as an exorcism in a dangerous disease. We read in this fragment how the patient asks for the assistance of a priest to heal his ailments, who thereupon addresses Izdubar the great judge "to whose hand the sun-god has entrusted the sceptre and the decision." After a short hymn in honor of ilu-Izdubar which exists only in part, and a few comforting words to cheer the patient, the priest addresses Izdubar as follows:<sup>1</sup>

"O Izdubar, powerful king, judge of the earth spirits,  
 Thou lofty one, great governor of mankind,  
 Thou who lookest down upon the quarters of the  
                   world,  
 Thou dispenser of the earth, and master of all things  
                   earthly,  
 Thou judge who discernest like unto a god,  
 Thou steppest forth upon the earth and proceedest to  
                   judgment,  
 Thy jurisdiction is never upset: thy command is never  
                   .....  
 Thou summonest, thou decidest, thou judgest, thou  
                   discriminatest.

<sup>1</sup> Roscher's *Lex. d. gr. u. r. Myth.*, II, p. 775.

The sun-god has entrusted sceptre and decision to  
 thy hand,  
 Kings, princes and governors bow down before thee,  
 Thou watchest upon their commands, and thou decidest  
 their decisions,  
 I am N. N., the son of N. N., whose god is N. N., and  
 whose goddess is N. N.,  
 Disease has seized me and I must do penance,  
 I bow before thee that thou mayest decide my case,



IZDUBAR CONQUERING THE LION.

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Proceed to judgment.....

Remove the disease [from my] body.

Conquer the evil.....

The evil that in my body [ravages]...."

Hereupon the priest addresses the patient saying:

"On this day the god has taken compassion on thee.  
 He has strengthened thee and will give a pure *ubuntu*(?)  
 [into thy mouth]."

The last words appear to refer to a kind of sacrament

which the patient takes for the sake of purification and recovery.

This fragment proves that Izdubar, the hero, not unlike Heracles has been deified in the course of a further evolution of this ideal and has become a judge and an assistant of the great protector of justice, the sun-god Shamash.



IZDUBAR STRANGLING A LION.

4208b

We can in this connection only indicate that the similarity of Heracles to Izdubar is commonly conceded not only in general, but also in some important details.

Izdubar is frequently identified with Nimrod, and we can not doubt that the Biblical Nimrod contains some features of the Izdubar story. Either one is a "great hunter



before the Lord," and the beginning of Izdubar's kingdom, as that of Nimrod, is "Babel and Erech and Akkad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar."<sup>1</sup> It is possible that Nimrod is an appellative of Izdubar. The name has been explained as "Bright Light."<sup>2</sup>

The name Izdubar recalls the nature of Mithras, who in the later development of Mazdaism plays approximately the part of Christ in Christianity. Mithras means "Splendor," and many mythological features of Mithraistic traditions indicate that he also is a personification of the sun and a deification of all the blessings which have found in the sun an appropriate symbolization.

The Izdubar epic as well as the Heracles myth treat the question of immortality, and though it seems that Izdubar (at least so far as the twelve tablets go) does not succeed in attaining his aim, we still see that the problem of immortality is the pivot of the whole poem. The Heracles myth is somewhat further developed for the hero surmounts all difficulties, and, though he must die, he attains Olympus and is there received into the circle of the celestial gods.

#### THE TWELVE TABLES OF THE IZDUBAR EPIC.

Most Assyriologists agree that the sun's passage through the twelve signs of the zodiac has furnished the original meaning for the stories told in the twelve tablets of the Izdubar epic.

In an ancient Assyrian document translated by Professor Sayce and published in the *Records of the Past*, (first series, Vol. I, p. 166), the Assyrian names of the months are enumerated together with their Akkadian equivalents, which, translated into English, read as follows: (1) the sacrifice of righteousness (March); (2) the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. x. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Roscher's *Lex. d. gr. u. r. Myth.*, II, p. 773.



THE ADVENTURES OF IZDUBAR.

From ancient monuments.

propitious bull (April); (3) of brick, and the twins (May); (4) seizer of seed (June); (5) fire that makes fire (July); (6) the errand of Istar (August); (7) the holy altar (September); (8) the bull-like founder<sup>1</sup> (October); (9) the very clouded (November); (10) the father of light (December); (11) abundance of rain (January); (12)



THE ADVENTURES OF IZDUBAR.

From ancient monuments.













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sowing of seed (February); and (13) the dark [month] of sowing, the latter being the intercalary month that was added every sixth year.

Among the cuneiform inscriptions of the first and second centuries B. C., we possess an astronomical tablet

<sup>1</sup> This translation is queried by Professor Sayce.

which contains the Babylonian Zodiac in the following abbreviations:<sup>2</sup>

1.  (*ku(sarikku)*) = aries.
2.  (*te(mennu)*) = taurus.
3.  (*mašu*) = gemini.
4.  (*pulukku*) = cancer.
5.  (*arū*) = leo.
6.  (*serū*) = virgo.
7.  (*zibanītu*) = libra.
8.  (*agrabu*) = scorpio.
9.  (*pa*) = arcitenens.
10.  (*enzu*) = caper.
11.  (*gu*) = amphora [aquarius].
12.  (*zib*) = pisces.

In the first tablet of the Izdubar epic the hero begins his career as a king, and kings are usually likened to "bell wethers." They are called the rams of the people<sup>3</sup> (Is. xiv. 9 and Zach. x. 3) and so it is assumed that they correspond to *Aries*.

Another explanation of *Aries* is mentioned by Epping and Strassmaier<sup>4</sup> which is worth quoting. The name of the first month, corresponding to the first sign of the zodiac, is spoken of in ancient inscriptions as "the sacrifice of righteousness," which would denote *Aries* to be a sacrificial offering and might indicate that just as the Jews celebrated the first of Nisan by an atonement for the entire people, so the Babylonians offered on their New Year's feast a ram in expiation of the sins of the nation.

In the second tablet Eabani appears, who is represented as a bull walking upright, corresponding to *Taurus*. The third tablet relates the friendship of Izdubar and Eabani,

<sup>2</sup> Epping and Strassmaier. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, Vol. V, Fascicle 4, October 1890, page 351.

<sup>3</sup> עֲתִירִים i. e., "the ready ones," "the butters."

<sup>4</sup> *Astronomisches aus Babylon*.



who are forthwith united like twins, and would thus be appropriate for the *Gemini*. We recognize further in the sixth month the sign of *Virgo* which corresponds to the sixth tablet relating the hero's adventures with the goddess Istar. The scorpion-man mentioned in the ninth tablet may correspond to *Sagittarius* of the ninth month.

The eleventh month corresponding to *Aquarius* is called *Gu* in the abbreviated table of zodiacal names, and since we read in a stray passage that "Mercury (or Jupiter) lingers in the constellation of Gula," we must assume that one of the zodiacal signs in which alone the planets can move, must have been dedicated to this goddess of the



IZDUBAR AND EABANI.

4247

nether world who also presided over the abyss called *tehom* or *Tiamat*, the deep, or the waters below. So it seems but a matter of course to identify the eleventh month representing the eleventh sign of the zodiac with Gula which again is to be identified with our *Aquarius*, who holds the corresponding place in all other zodiacs, either as a man pouring out water, or simply an amphora. The adventure of the eleventh tablet contains the deluge story, whose hero is the Babylonian Noah, Sitnapishtim, or as Berosos calls him, Xisuthros.

Sitnapishtim, the great sage whom Izdubar consults

in regard to the water of life and the miraculous plant of promise, relates the wrath of the gods and the story of the deluge which represents so many analogies to the Biblical account, and then directs the hero to the land of no return where he would find what he seeks. The Izdubar epic here reaches the climax of its interest, for the hero's journey to the underworld affords a good opportunity to set forth the Babylonian view of life after death.

On account of the fragmentary condition of the twelve tablets, it will be difficult to say more on the subject, but the few references which we possess are sufficient indications of a connection between the Izdubar epic and the adventures of the sun during the twelve months of the



SITNAPISHTIM, THE BABYLONIAN NOAH.

2102

year and his migration through the twelve signs of the zodiac.

#### IZDUBAR AND IMMORTALITY.

The end of Samson is the main point in which a comparison of the Hebrew hero with Heracles and Izdubar breaks down, for it is characteristic of pagan solar myths that the sun-god goes down to Sheol, or whatever may be the name of the world of the dead, and returns thence to the world of the living. Not only Heracles descends to Hades, but also other heroes of the same type, Odysseus, Orpheus, Æneas, etc., and the same is stated of Izdubar. The acquisition of immortality is the aim of both the Greek and

the Babylonian heroes. In his anxiety to find his dead friend Eabani, Izdubar goes in search for the land of no return, and arrives at the coast, but the Queen of the Sea informs him that none but Shamash, the god of the sun, has ever crossed the ocean. However, Izdubar is persistent and is finally permitted to venture on the sea in company with the ferry-man, Arad-Ea, the Babylonian Charon.<sup>1</sup> They reach the Isles of the Blest and while remaining in the ferry Izdubar speaks with his friend, who gives him information concerning the fate of the dead. Eabani thinks that the hero could not endure the description, but he com-



IZDUBAR AND ARAD-EA.

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forts him with the thought that those who receive proper funeral rites will be well taken care of. Suffering from leprosy Izdubar seeks the water of life and the plant of life. He is healed from leprosy through the assistance of Sitnapishtim, and he finds the plant which he calls "as an old man he is changed into a youth," but by some mishap he loses it again.

When Heracles started out in search for the immortal-ity-giving apples of the Hesperides, he encountered also the difficulty of crossing the ocean, and he succeeded only because the sun-god allowed him to use his bark.

<sup>1</sup> The Greeks owe their ideas concerning the other world mainly to the Egyptians, and so the names "Charon" and "Elysium" are Egyptian. The former simply means "ferry-man" and the latter is the Egyptian *Aalu*, the Fields of the Blest,—also spelled *Aaru*.

Izdubar after death becomes a god, and Heracles too is welcomed in Olympus, but Samson's career ends with his life.

#### SAMSON AND HERACLES.

It is customary even among critical minds to speak with admiration of the literary beauty and grandeur of the Samson story. Steinthal among others has devoted a number of pages to its praise, and I will not deny that especially the oldest and most original passages are animated by a truly poetic spirit, but judging the work in its present form I can only regret the censorship of its Deuteronomic editor, for I believe that the passages which he has cut out as mythological, have been the most valuable, the most interesting, and also the most religious part of the legend. They are now lost beyond hope of recovery, and so the hero of a primitive faith that was animated by a belief in immortality, has become a mere country lout and a tough, who conscious of his physical strength is always ready for a brawl, and we feel the delight of the narrator as well as his audience when Samson finds a pretext to kill indiscriminately some thirty or a thousand Philistines. Even considered from the standpoint of Israelitic patriotism he has done nothing to lift his nation to a higher plane or a nobler conception of life.

How much higher ranges the Greek Heracles, who in spite of the primitive crudeness of the original myth, has been idealized by Greek poets and philosophers into a pattern of highminded virtue!

As early as the seventh century before Christ the poet Peisander wrote an apotheosis of Heracles, called the *Heraclea*, and later Greek authors, such men as Xenophon and Prodicus,<sup>1</sup> regarded him as an incarnation of divine perfection. It was said of Heracles that he came to the

<sup>1</sup> Xen., *Mem.* II, 1; Plato, *Symp.*, p. 177 B.



parting of the ways of life and he chose the difficult and steep, the way of virtue in preference to the broad and easy



THE FARNESE HERACLES.

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road to vice. And since Heracles had become the ideal of Greek youth, it became customary to look upon the details

of the old myth as mere perversions of a deeper religious truth, supposed to be the original. Epictetus who calls Heracles a saviour, and the son of Zeus, says: "Do you believe the fables of Homer?"

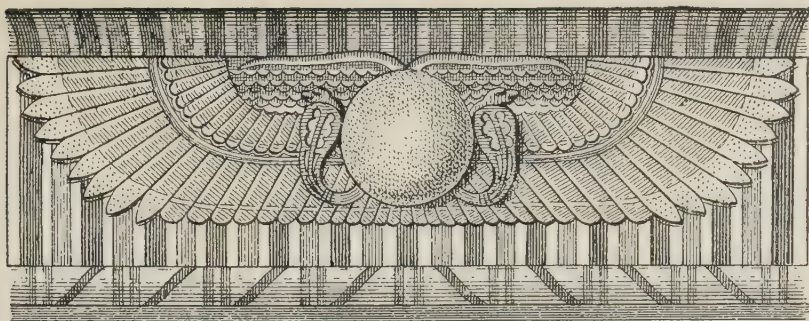
Heracles is called repeller of evil (ἀλεξίκακος), leader in the fray (πρόμαχος), the brightly victorious (καλλίνικος), the celestial (ὀλύμπιος), destroyer of flies, vermin, and grasshoppers (μυίαργος, ἰπόκτονος, κορνοπίων). He, the solar hero, is identified with Apollo, the sun-god, in the names prophet (μάντις), and leader of the Muses (μουσαγέτης).

Seneca speaks of Heracles as the ideal of the good man who lives exclusively for the welfare of mankind. Contrasting him to Alexander the Great, the conqueror of Asia, he says (*De Benef.*, I, 14):

"Heracles never gained victories for himself. He wandered through the circles of the earth, not as a conqueror, but as a protector. What, indeed, should the enemy of the wicked, the defensor of the good, the peace-bringer, conquer for himself either on land or sea!"

Epictetus praises Heracles frequently and declares that the evils which he combated served to elicit his virtues, and were intended to try him (I, 6). Zeus, who is identified with God, is called his father and Heracles is said to be his son (III, 26). Heracles, when obliged to leave his children, knew them to be in the care of God. Epictetus says (III, 24):

"He knew that no man is an orphan, but that there is a father always and constantly for all of them. He had not only heard the words that Zeus was the father of men, for he regarded him as *his* father and called him such; and looking up to him he did what Zeus did. Therefore he could live happily everywhere."



## DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE SUN.

SAMSON A PROTOTYPE OF CHRIST.

NOTHING is more natural than that man should find comfort in the daily reappearance of the sun as symbolizing a constant resurrection of life from death, and the same circle of a change from life to death and from death back again to life is repeated in the seasons of the year. As the vegetation on earth blooms in summer and withers in winter, only to be revived by the invigorating sun of spring, so man hopes for his resurrection from the grave, and a continued life after death.

The most impressive feature of all the solar myths is the death and resurrection of the sun-god, and it seems probable that this episode of the story had its ultimate origin not in the south, but in the north where the sun actually disappears and is born again. The phenomenon of the winter solstice has led to the celebration of the Yule Tide as the nativity of the new sun, a feast which was celebrated among the Persians in honor of Mithras, the virgin-born mediator between Ahura Mazda (i. e., Lord Omniscient) and mankind; and the festival of the nativity of Mithras was again changed in Christian times into Christmas, because, as says St. Chrysostom (*Hom.* 31), "On this day [the birthday of Mithras], also the birthday of Christ was lately fixed at Rome in order that

whilst the heathen were busied with their profane ceremonies, the Christians might perform their holy rites undisturbed." Even in the days of Pope Leo the Great, in the fifth century, it was not yet forgotten that the winter solstice was the birth festival of the sun, for the Pope says that there are "some to whom this day of our celebration is worthy of honor not so much on account of the birth of Christ as for the sake of the renewal of the sun."

The Samson story breaks off very abruptly and leaves a very unsatisfactory ending in its present form, the only



THE ASCENT OF HERACLES TO OLYMPUS.

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Ancient vase picture.

comfort being that in his death the hero kills an incredible number of Philistines. If this had been all, the Biblical tale would simply be the record of a dearly bought victory of the Philistines.

However, we must take into consideration,—and the significance of this point should not be underrated,—that Christians look upon Samson as one of the prototypes of Christ. Yet, strange to say, the point which alone could have made Samson a prototype of Christ is missing in the Samson story.



Prototype means a first or imperfect and only tentative type. All solar heroes are prototypes of Christ, and when the fulfilment of the times focused all pre-Christian religions into one, everything worthy and good in the prototypes of Christ was transferred upon Jesus whom the Church accepted as the fulfilment. In this perspective the Samson story seems to regain its original pagan significance as symbolizing man's hope for immortality.

The saviours and heroes of Greek and Roman mythol-



DESCENT OF DIONYSUS TO HADES.

1924

ogy (Heracles, Dionysus, Orpheus, Æneas etc.), had gone down into the domain of Hades and returned to the land of the living; so it was a predetermined doctrine that Jesus before he could be recognized as the Christ, had to descend to hell and rise again from the tomb.

The original narrative of the Samson story must have ended in the glorious return of the hero to life, but the Biblical account knows nothing of it.

## THE PHŒNICIAN MELKARTH.

We have reliable information that the Phœnicians celebrated Melkarth's death and resurrection on two distinct days of their festive calendar. The commemoration of the god's self-sacrifice on the pyre was still celebrated in the days of Dio Chrysostom in an annual feast at which the god's effigy was burned on a gorgeous pyre; and Professor W. Robertson Smith quoting this statement from O. Müller adds that it "must have its origin in an older rite, in which the victim was not a mere effigy but a theanthropic sacrifice, i. e., an actual man or sacred animal, whose life according to an antique conception was an embodiment of the divine human life." The story of Sardanapalus and kindred legends are merely survivals of the Melkarth myth as has been pointed out by O. Müller in his article "Sandon und Sardanapal."<sup>1</sup>

The festival of the resurrection of Melkarth was celebrated annually in the month of Peritius which falls at the end of February and the beginning of March, at the time when the quail returns to Palestine, coming in immense crowds in a single night;<sup>2</sup> and according to Eudoxus<sup>3</sup> a quail sacrifice was made to commemorate the resurrection of the god.

Every myth of deep religious significance has the tendency to change into saga or legend, and will even influence history. Myths are frequently humanized by being ascribed to a national hero, or to some prominent historical person. But it also happens that some pious man is influenced by the ideas of his religion and actualizes in his life the lesson which his faith has installed into his heart. This is seen in the following incident recorded in Herodotus VII, 167. There the Greek historian tells of the

<sup>1</sup> *Rhein. Mus.*, Ser. I, Vol. III.

<sup>2</sup> *Jos. Ant.* VIII, 5. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Athen, IX, 47.

Carthaginians fighting with the Greeks in Sicily in a battle which lasted the whole day from morning until night; and that Hamilcar, anxious to gain a decisive victory, offered holocausts on a great pyre, but when he saw that his people were routed, leapt into the fire himself and sacrificed his life for the good of his people. Thus he was burned to death and disappeared, and Herodotus adds: "In this way Hamilcar may have disappeared as is stated by the Carthaginians, or it may have been different as say the Syracusans, but this much is sure that the Carthaginians offer him sacrifices, and have erected monuments in his honor in all their colonies, though the greatest of them is in the city of Carthage."

Some scholars think that Herodotus here confuses the Carthaginian hero with his god and transfers the myth from Baal Melkarth upon Hamilcar; but whether or not the incident is to be accepted as historical, it proves the power of myth and the influence of religious conceptions upon the actual life of the people.

#### THE DYING GOD.

There are a number of incidental features in the Samson legend that are occasionally met with in kindred tales of saviours, dying gods, sacrificial divinities and solar heroes. They have not been mentioned before, because they are difficult to classify and so we group them here together as a collection of stray observations having one common point of issue, the fate of the saviour-god who lives and dies for mankind.

The people of a primitive age formed their idea of a saviour-god according to their religious convictions, traditions, expectations and especially their superstitions, all of which had become incorporated in the performance of their annual festivals. When the time came that they expected a Messiah or a Saviour, they naturally measured

those figures of stories or perhaps also of natural life, with the notions they thus attributed to the ideal formed of him; and as soon as some hero, historical or legendary, became a candidate for the honor of being recognized as a god-man his admirers naturally ascribed to him all those features which were deemed the indispensable characteristics of the god.

As an instance of this general rule we find in the canonical scriptures of the Buddhists thirty-two main, and eighty minor characteristic marks<sup>1</sup> ascribed to the Buddha, and there it is stated that Gautama Siddhartha possessed them all, incredible though it may have been. In the same way there are thirty-two "Prognostics" indicating the birth of the Buddha. We quote in this connection only a few to characterize the whole class:<sup>2</sup>

"An immeasurable light spread through ten thousand worlds; the blind recovered their sight, as if from desire to see this his glory; the deaf received their hearing; the dumb talked; the hunchbacked became straight of body; the lame recovered the power to walk; all those in bonds were freed from their bonds and chains; the fires went out in all the hells."

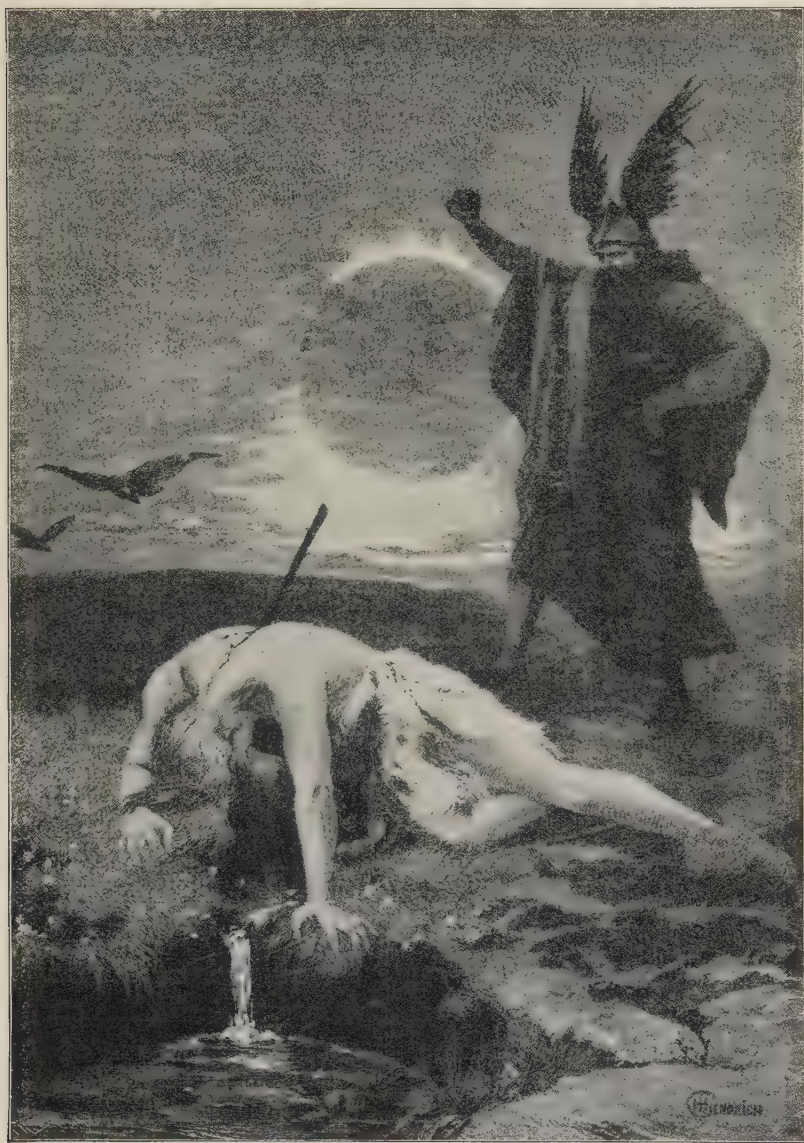
The argument is simply this: that without any doubt Gautama Siddhartha was the Buddha, therefore all the characteristics and prognostics of a Buddha apply to him.

The general law, modified only in its details, holds good in Christianity. The Gospel writers deem it their duty to prove that Jesus was the Christ, and so even where they do not manufacture the facts of the life of Jesus, their reports are made under the influence of their interpretation of the Christ idea. It is taken for granted by the early Christians that the death of Jesus was a vicarious atonement. We read that he was king, that he played the part

<sup>1</sup> Enumerated in the *Dharma Samgraha*.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to the *Jataka*, I, 47. 21. Translated by Warren in his *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 44.





SIEGFRIED'S DEATH.

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After a painting by Herman Hendrich.

The artist bears in mind the mythical significance of the Siegfried saga in representing the death of the solar hero as taking place at the moment of an eclipse of the sun, while we see the transient victory of the power of evil in the sinister and treacherous figure of Hagen.

of a mock king shortly before his death, that his devotees must eat his flesh and drink his blood, otherwise they can not partake of the blessings of his sacrifice.

We do not say that the life of Jesus, especially his passion and crucifixion were unhistorical; on the contrary we believe firmly that the nucleus of the Gospel stories is based upon fact, but we insist that the Gospel writers had in mind a typical, albeit vague, idea of the traditional conception of the god-man, and they interpreted the facts with a tendency which consciously or unconsciously dominated their minds, that they had to prove that Jesus was the Christ and that both his personality and his destiny fulfilled all the conditions of the current expectations. Thereby they incorporated inadvertently and sometimes purposely all those features which in their time were deemed indispensable characteristics of the Saviour.

We notice that Heracles is made a servant and he is bound by his destiny to accomplish the twelve labors for the weal of mankind. The underlying idea is that the sun drudges as a slave in the ministry of our needs; and so Samson too is degraded into a slave and set to turning a mill. It is expressly stated also of Christ (Phil. ii. 7) that he "took upon him the form of a servant."

The explanation of the unhappy fate of the dying god receives different versions in different stories, but it is natural that he is always represented as the innocent victim of treachery. Judas is made responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, and Samson succumbs to the wiles of the treacherous Delilah. The legendary character of the story appears also in the fact that any ordinary mortal would have been on his guard against the falsehoods of his par amour, but in myths and legends the destiny of a man is determined by other conditions, and so he is represented as incredibly stupid and absolutely blind to the snares laid for him. On the other hand, Delilah as well as the Phil-

istines ought to have had other methods to find out Samson's secret.

Berosus tells us of Babylonian customs that "during the five days of the festival called the *Sacaea*, a prisoner condemned to death was dressed in the king's robes, seated on the king's throne, allowed to eat, drink, and order whatever he chose, and even permitted to sleep with the king's concubines. But at the end of five days he was stripped of his royal insignia, scourged and hanged or crucified."<sup>3</sup> This feast was celebrated to represent dramatically the fate of the dying god in the same spirit and a similar fashion as was the custom among the Aztecs of Central America and the Khonds of Bengal.

This Babylonian rite is apparently, as Mr. Frazer suggests,<sup>4</sup> a further evolution of a more ancient custom that is still practiced among the savage tribes of Africa, according to which the king, who is believed to be an incarnation of the deity, usually the god of life, or of the sun, or heaven, is sacrificed in his best years and before his physical power can give out. Mr. Frazer says:

"We must not forget that the king is slain in his character of a god, his death, and resurrection, as the only means of perpetuating the divine life unimpaired, being deemed necessary for the salvation of his people and the world."

With the advance of civilization the old custom was modified. Mr. Frazer says:

"When the time drew near for the king to be put to death, he abdicated for a few days, during which a temporary king reigned and suffered in his stead. At first the temporary king may have been an innocent person, possibly a member of the king's own family; but with the growth of civilization, the sacrifice of an innocent person

<sup>3</sup> See J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Vol. II, pp. 24 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 240 ff.

would be revolting to the public sentiment, and accordingly a condemned criminal would be invested with the brief and fatal sovereignty."

Finally even the vicarious sacrifice of a substitute king was abolished, and either replaced by an animal victim or merely acted on the stage in a dramatic performance.

Though the victim is a god, or rather the representation or incarnation of the deity, he is to be abandoned to the most dreadful fate of death, and so we meet with a statement that in the last moment he is forsaken by his god. As Christ cries out "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*," so we learn that Yahveh forsook Samson and his strength was gone.

A special endeavor is made to have the sacrifice voluntary, and this is done among the Aztecs by intoxicating the victim with drinks and with honors and slaying him before he has a chance to give an ill-omened sign of regret. At the same time the people must have come into possession of the person of the victim in a legal way. Accordingly it is insisted on that he has to be purchased with money and the price must be paid before the sacrifice is performed. This feature is evident in the ritual of the Khonds and is not absent either in the Christ story where Judas receives the thirty pieces of silver, nor in the Samson story in which a sum of money is paid to Delilah.

The idea that no atonement of sin is possible without the shedding of blood is common to all pre-Christian religions (with the sole exception of Buddhism), and even Christianity still clings to it, as we read in Hebrews ix. 22, "without shedding of blood is no remission."

The old Mexicans slew their god and ate him, which is a symbolical act indicating that we live on the deity, be it the god of vegetation or any other life-spending source of nature. Originally the harvest god is thought present in the very cereals, and in partaking of food we partake



of the god himself. From this standpoint it was deemed essential that the devotees should eat the flesh and drink the blood<sup>5</sup> of the god and we cannot doubt that in the age of savagery, this ritual was literally performed, horrible though it must appear to modern mankind that condemns cannibalism as the most detestable abomination. In place of the human representative of the god we find in the ceremonies of a less savage age a substitute of some kind, either a sacrificial animal or a sacrificial bread offering, which latter was frequently kneaded in the shape of the god incarnation. A ceremony in which the figure of a god made of dough is killed and then sacramentally eaten is still performed in Tibet, and we can not doubt that the original conception of the Lord's Supper is an echo of this ancient rite of eating the god, which was deemed an essential part of the feast held in his honor.

The same idea is very emphatically expressed in John vi. 53-57: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

The great progress of Christianity consisted in the practical abolition of all blood-sacrifices as well as the actual partaking of the flesh and blood of the victim. The idea of the significance of blood and the shedding of blood was too firmly rooted in the minds of the large masses of mankind simply to be set aside as was done in India by the Buddha. Acknowledging the force of the ancient re-

<sup>5</sup> Even the Old Testament speaks of "the blood of the grapes." See Gen. xliv, 11.

ligions, Christianity overcame them by pointing out that the atonement was now accomplished for all time through the death of Christ, and the sacrament of partaking of the very flesh and blood of the god was sufficiently performed by the substitution of sanctified bread and wine. This satisfied all the pagan claims without continuing the barbarous ceremony.

If the original Samson story contained anything of this kind it would have been so offensive to the redactor that he would not have tolerated it, and so its absence is naturally explained.

How tenacious traditions are! The old ritual of a human sacrifice has been abandoned but the festival is still continued to the present day in the form of the carnival which not without a good historical reason precedes in the annals of the Christian calendar the celebration of the passion of Christ. The king of the carnival was originally the victim that was to undergo the torture of a sacrificial death, but shortly before his doom he enjoyed the honors of a mock-kingdom. We read of Christ that they "put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!"

It can scarcely be accidental that the Philistines are said to have had Samson produced at their festival, "that he might make them sport."

We cannot doubt that the king of the Sacæan festival was conducted through the city in festive procession, and we are inclined to think that this feature of the ceremony formed one of the most popular and impressive parts of the feast. Even this has been preserved in both the story of Christ and latter-day customs, such as carnival processions. The Gospel stories dwell with special emphasis on the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and some



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CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

By Doré.

of our Christian artists have indeed represented the scene as a theatrical pageant which is specially notable in Doré's well-known painting.

Our carnivals have originated from dramatic representations and are a secular treatment of the same religious ceremony, which in the Church developed as the so-called mystery-play, originally a dramatic performance of the Easter story.

In the age of Constantine Christianity became the state religion of the Roman empire. This event, to be sure, Christianized the broad masses of the people but it introduced at the same time a number of pagan features and pagan beliefs into the life of the Church. It must have been in this age that the Church continued the practice of making the Easter ritual a dramatic performance after the precedence of the Attis and Tammuz festivals, the former of which, as we learn from Firmicus, was celebrated on the first day of spring while his resuscitation to life was placed two days later.

How much the Christian ceremonies preserve of the ancient pagan traditions appears also from the significance that light plays in the Easter ritual. In the Greek Church the priest announces the beginning of the feast with the words: "The celestial fire has come down from the clouds; the holy candle is lit."

There is an additional point worth mentioning. The word *sakhaq*,<sup>6</sup> which in English versions is commonly translated "to make sport," includes the meaning of singing, dancing, and playing on musical instruments, in the same way that the word "play" is also used in both senses.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly Luther translates the term by *spielen*, and the traditional interpretation as represented in

<sup>6</sup> שחק

<sup>7</sup> For further particulars see Gesenius's Hebrew Dictionary, German ed., Vol. II, p. 615.



some Biblical pictures makes Samson play on a stringed instrument which proves that our popular conception of him is unconsciously associated with Apollo, the solar god, who is at the same time a master of the lute.

These notes on comparative saviour-lore throw a light also on the construction of the Gospel story of Christ in which we find so many echoes of ancient pagan saviours.



SAMSON'S DEATH.

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Here as well as in the illustration of the same scene on page IIII the harp is in evidence.

Samson, the solar hero and as such a prototype of Christ, was betrayed and sold for money; he drudged as a slave, and shortly before his death made sport before the Philistines. These incidents are minor points, but their introduction into the Samson legend can scarcely be regarded as accidental, when we bear in mind the significance which these same features possess in kindred stories

where their connection with the underlying idea of the fate of the dying saviour-god has not yet been lost.

#### OSIRIS.

The same keynote of the dying god who rises to new life resounds through the Egyptian story of Osiris, which is a hoary echo of the primitive African faith. We here present a brief synopsis of it in the terse language of Professor Budge, who in his preface to *The Gods of the Egyptians* (xiv-xvi) characterizes the belief in Osiris thus:

“The cult of Osiris, the dead man deified, and the earliest forms of his worship, were, no doubt, wholly of African origin; these are certainly the oldest elements in the religion of the Dynastic Period, and the most persistent, for Osiris maintained his position of the god and judge of the dead from the Predynastic to the Ptolemaic Period. The followers of Horus who brought a solar religion with them into Egypt from the East, never succeeded in dislodging Osiris from his exalted position, and his cult survived undiminished notwithstanding the powerful influence which the priests of Rā, and the worshipers of Amen, and the votaries of Aten respectively exercised throughout the country. The heaven of Osiris was believed to exist in a place where the fields were fertile and well stocked with cattle, and where meat and drink were abundant; the abodes of the blessed were thought to be constructed after the model of the comfortable Egyptian homesteads in which they had lived during life, and the ordinary Egyptian hoped to live in one of these with his wives and parents. On the other hand, the followers of Rā, the sun-god, believed in a heaven of a more spiritual character, and their great hope was to occupy a seat in the boat of the god, and, arrayed in light, to travel whithersoever he went. They wished to become bright and shining spirits, and to live upon the celestial meat and drink upon which

he lived; as he was so they hoped to be in every respect. The materialistic heaven of Osiris appealed to the masses of Egypt, and the heaven where Rā lived to the priest of Rā and other solar gods, and to royal and aristocratic families, and to the members of the foreign section of the community who were of Eastern origin.

“The various waves of religious thought and feeling, which swept over Egypt during the five thousand years of her history which are known to us, did not seriously disturb the cult of Osiris, for it held out to the people hopes of resurrection and immortality of a character which no other form of religion could give. Secure in these hopes the people regarded the various changes and developments of religious ideas in their country with equanimity and modifications in the public worship of the gods, provided that the religious fasts and processions were not interrupted, moved them but little. Kings and priests from time to time made attempts to absorb the cult of Osiris into religious systems of a solar character, but they failed, and Osiris, the man-god, always triumphed, and at the last, when his cult disappeared before the religion of the Man Christ, the Egyptians who embraced Christianity found that the moral system of the old cult and that of the new religion were similar, and the promises of resurrection and immortality in each so much alike, that they transferred their allegiance from Osiris to Jesus of Nazareth without difficulty. Moreover, Isis and the child Horus were straightway identified with Mary the Virgin and her Son, and in the apocryphal literature of the first centuries which followed the evangelization of Egypt, several of the legends about Isis and her sorrowful wanderings were made to center round the Mother of Christ. Certain of the attributes of the sister goddesses of Isis were also ascribed to her, and, like the Goddess Neith of Saïs, she was declared to possess perpetual virginity. Certain of

the Egyptian Christian Fathers gave to the Virgin the title "Theotokos," or "Mother of God," forgetting, apparently, that it was an exact translation of *neter mut*, a very old and common title of Isis."

To us and at any rate to the average Christian since the beginning of the middle ages, the belief in Osiris is pagan, and many of its details may seem absurd, but to the ancient Egyptian the story was full of significance. It is difficult to say how far the average Egyptian believed in the details of the myth, but we know that the significance of it was fully appreciated on the banks of the Nile, and served as a source of unspeakable comfort to millions of people.

The same is true of other myths. The lamentation for Tammuz, which the prophet<sup>1</sup> so bitterly denounces, was in its time no less deeply felt nor less devoutly celebrated in Syria than a Good Friday celebration now-a-days in Christian Italy may stir the hearts of good Christians.

The stories of Heracles, Jason, Adonis, and also of the demi-gods of India, as well as the interior of Asia, and even of the savages of Africa and the Oceanic Islands, all come from the same source, which is the religious want of a saviour, of a God-man, who though real man, is divine, an incarnation of the deity, and comes to rescue us from evil, sin and death. The meaning of the story is the same throughout, and the religious spirit that begets it is higher or lower according to the nature of the people.

That the pagans are frequently possessed of the same religious devotion and attain to the greatest heights of moral ideals, can be seen by a study of the several religions of the earth. How kin the ancient Babylonians were to the Jews in their religious conception, and especially in their idea of sin and atonement, is shown in their penitential hymns so similar even in details to the Hebrew psalms of the Old Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel viii. 14.



## SAMSON'S TOMB.

Every province of Egypt had a sepulchre of Osiris, and the legend explained this by telling how his body had been cut into several pieces which were buried in these different places. Perhaps originally the priests of every sepulchre claimed for their fane that the entire body of Osiris rested there; for we know that some of the Greek gods, too, possessed tombs, and it is not impossible that the same god possessed several tombs. We will not be mistaken if we look upon these tombs as cenotaphs, or empty sepulchres, not unlike Christian crypts, erected for the sole purpose of impressing the people with the reality of the god that had died and come to life again.

It is pretty certain that the names beginning with *Beth*, i. e., "house," indicate the presence of a temple. Beth-Lehem is the city where stood the house of Laham (i. e., a temple of the god Laham) and in the same way Beth Shemesh must have been the site of the temple of the sun-god, Shamash. It was situated right between Zorah and Eshtaol and we are told that there, too, (i. e., between Zorah and Eshtaol) was the tomb of the Manoah tribe where Samson lay buried. This sepulchre may have been near the temple of Shamash or may even have been connected with it, and the probability is that it was just as empty as were all the cenotaphs of Egyptian and other Gentile gods.

In the *Recognitions of Clement* (X, 23) it is stated that the tomb of Zeus is shown among the Cretans, and we read further (*ibid.* 24):

"But also the sepulchres of Jupiter's sons, who are regarded among the Gentiles as gods, are openly pointed out, one in one place, and another in another: that of Mercury at Hermopolis; that of the Cyprian Venus at Cyprus; that of Mars in Thrace; that of Bacchus at

Thebes, where he is said to have been torn in pieces; that of Hercules at Tyre, where he was burnt with fire; that of Æsculapius in Epidaurus."

#### WHY THE RESURRECTION OF SAMSON WAS SUPPRESSED.

Though the Samson legend must have been the ancient Hebrew myth of the adventures of the sun-god, all those extraordinary miracles which savor of pagan divinities have been reduced to deeds of human valor and among other things the most characteristic event of a mythological nature, Samson's resurrection, has been removed. I am convinced that in the original Samson epic the return of the hero from Sheol played a prominent part, for all pagan sun worshipers gloried in their god, because, although at nightfall he descends into hell, he comes out again the next morning unscathed. All sun-hero myths preach immortality on the argument that the sun loses his power in winter and is resuscitated to life in the spring.

The theme of the original Samson legend can only have been the same great legend which at all times and among all nations engrossed the attention of religious thinkers. It is an answer to the question "Is death the end of all?" The legend of the descent of the sun into Orcus and his triumphant return to life is the good tidings that proclaims the eternity of life, and the remarkable stories of the adventures of the sun, be it in the different countries over which he passed or in the several mansions in the sky, form an inexhaustible storehouse for all kinds of wondrous romance.

This same subject constitutes the most typical feature of all the most important and most popular myths of mankind. In fact we may consider it as the most characteristic type of pagan religion which is still reflected in fairy tales (such as the story of Psyche) and all kindred traditions. Everywhere we meet with a hero who is somehow the in-

carnation of the deity or a god that has temporarily assumed human form to appear on earth as a helper and saviour. We learn of his troubles and dangers, of the enemies who encompass him and gain an apparent victory over his cause, but finally he overcomes all evil and breaks through the doors of death gaining new life and new strength in his glorious resurrection. Nor is this characteristic feature of pagan myths limited to the sun-god. It appears also in the sprouting and withering vegetation, which temporarily succumbs to the intrigues of winter but reappears victoriously every spring in the field.

It is a remarkable fact which has frequently been pointed out, that while Babylonians, Syrians, Phœnicians and Egyptians believed in immortality, the Old Testament contains no allusions to it. On the contrary, it denounces as an abomination the rites of Tammuz, the god who dies and rises to life again, and condemns to death all wizards and witches who after the fashion of mediums (as instanced in the story of the witch of Endor) used to summon and consult the spirits of the dead. The truth is that the priestly redactors were animated with a zeal for a pure monotheism and a contempt for all pagan institutions. They were convinced that Yahveh had revealed himself to Moses as the one and only true God, and so they looked upon all traces of polytheistic customs in their traditions as backsliding into the ways of idolatry. It is natural therefore that they would not countenance in their Scriptures such features or doctrines as would indicate that their fathers had sanctioned the fables of the Gentiles, and they would necessarily omit the resurrection story of Samson which reminded them so much of the resurrection of Tammuz.

The immortality idea could not be suppressed for any length of time and so it asserted itself again in the apocryphal books which constitute the most important link be-

tween Judaism and Christianity. They contain the seeds from which Christianity developed and also explain how later Judaism adopted a belief in the immortality of the soul, which, however, has been purified of the pagan elements attached to the Babylonian view, so closely connected with the mythology of Istar and Tammuz and the superstitious practices of spirit conjurors.

#### THE REDACTION OF THE SAMSON STORY.

The treatment of the Samson legend fairly characterizes the general work of a late redactor. It is firmly established that the leading minds among the Jews in the Babylonian exile were zealous monotheists. They hated mythology, polytheism, and the worship of idols in any form. They spurned the paganism of the surrounding nations as well as in their own tradition. And so in collecting their sacred literature, they edited the several scriptures in a rationalizing spirit. Far from being credulous, as freethinkers usually represent them, we insist that they were the rationalists, the freethinkers, and iconoclasts of their age. And so they either cut out the mythological element as pagan superstition or humanized its supernatural features, or explained pagan institutions as apostasy.<sup>1</sup>

It is characteristic of the Bible that with very few exceptions fables and folklore in their original form are absent, and the cosmological stories have been simplified into a dry report of a six days' work of creation, yet some traces of the originally mythological character of the ancient Hebrew legend have been preserved in the Old Testament, in spite of the attempt at their obliteration.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Such passages as Judges ii. 13, or iii. 7; iv. 1; viii. 38, etc. are of Deuteronomic origin and, it seems to me, indicate omissions from the sources which the priestly redactor still had at his command. The original sources from which he drew his account were not yet purely monotheistic and must have related how the Israelites worshiped not only יהוה but also Baal and Astarte. Our redactor ascribed all the misfortunes that befell Israel to the worship of other gods, and he selected with preference the heroes of Yahveh worship for national commendation.

<sup>2</sup> See the author's articles "The Fairy-Tale Element in the Bible," *The*



Nothing was more odious to the reformers of Judaism than the pagan ideas incorporated in the Tammuz ritual, which consists in the bewailing of the dying god, and shortly afterward in the celebration of his resurrection, a kind of Babylonian Good Friday with its subsequent Easter festival. The absence in the Old Testament of any allusion to a belief in the immortality of the soul finds its easiest explanation in the theory that all references to it have been carefully removed, and so it is in keeping with the general tendency of the redactor's work that the Samson story should have been cut short where it became too similar to the myths of pagan deities such as Tammuz, Adonis, and Marduk, who descended into the realm of the dead, broke open the gates of hell, and returned victoriously to the land of the living. Thus the Samson story by being rationalized became a torso. It has been deprived of its original meaning and has simply been reduced to the story of a rollicking bravo, whose sole merit consists in having done great injury to the Philistines.

#### CONCLUSION.

From all that has been said of the Samson story we must grant that it resembles not only the pagan solar myths and the fate of the dying gods, but also the life of Christ in whom in the course of the religious development of mankind all these weird and mysterious notions have found their final expression. But the main event without which the story of the Crucified would be a tragedy—the resurrection—is missing in the Samson story.

While the Samson story as we have it is a torso, and can as such be regarded as satisfactory neither from a religious nor literary standpoint, it is nevertheless a most valuable relic in the history of the evolution of religious

*Monist*, XI, p. 405; and "The Babylonian and Hebrew Views of Man's Fate After Death," *The Open Court*, XV, p. 346.

ideas. The story as it stands has no doubt been mutilated and has suffered from the hands of monotheistic zealots, who in their well-intended anxiety to cut out the pagan



EASTER MORNING.

By Fra Angelico.

element have removed its most characteristic features, yet there is enough left to give an approximate idea of what the ideal of a divine incarnation had become in the phase

of Danite civilization. We still feel the thrill with which narrator and hearer were warmed while thinking of the irresistible Samson. We enjoy the very sound of the Hebrew original, most poetic in those fragments which must be deemed most ancient, and so we will naturally look with reverence upon this interesting religious document for we know that the hero who is represented by Heracles, Izdubar, Odysseus, Siegfried, Mithra and others, is a preliminary and tentative formation of that great ideal which found its final completion in the Christian idea of the God-man, Christ, the judge who at his second advent is to sit in judgment over the quick and the dead, the King of the world to come when there shall be no misery, no want nor worry, and no death.

There is one point only to be added for the purpose of anticipating a misconstruction of the significance of our results. The similarity of the Christ story to pagan legends does not lower Christianity to the level of paganism: but, on the contrary, it raises paganism to the dignity of genuine religion. Pagan myths, in spite of their crudities, are born of the same yearning, the same devotion, the same hopes. We do not say that paganism and Christianity are on the same level, for they are marked by decided differences. Paganism belongs to the period of nature worship while Christianity characterizes the age in which an appreciation of the soul establishes a contrast between nature and spirit. As a result of these differences the Christian version of the God-man discards all those features which are all too human and all too natural, and savor strongly of materialism, translating the story into that conception of spirituality which pervades the entire religious atmosphere of the age.

Our treatment of the Samson story conveys a lesson of no mean importance, and one that is gradually being recognized among leading theologians, namely that com-

parative religion and higher criticism will considerably modify our religious faith.

Some pious people in their well-intentioned anxiety for the holiest ideals of mankind denounce research as ungodly and shun it as if it were sinful and a work of the evil one. They foresee the coming change and feel a lack of strength to adapt themselves to it. Yet the change is unavoidable. It would be better for them had they less belief in the letter and more faith in the spirit. If the results of scientific investigation are wrong we need not worry, for they will soon be refuted; but if they be the truth, no power can prevail against them. And if they are true, they can not be evil, for the truth is of God—perhaps not of the God of a sectarian interpretation of religion, but the God of truth, the God of honesty, the God of veracity, the God of science.

Science is not a human invention. Science is a revelation of God and in the field of religion, science is destined to accomplish the work of a great reformation. Science will mature our religious longings and purify our faith. Comparative religion will broaden us, and criticism is the refining furnace which will enable us to separate the gold from the dross.

It is more than probable that we shall have to lose some of our dearest fancies. They will go because they were mere fancies, not truths; but let us not forget that religion is not based upon historical facts nor on traditions rooted in the past. Religion is based upon eternal truths. Religion exists, it has existed, and will exist as long as the human heart will beat. Religion exists to-day because the human heart is possessed of certain religious needs. We want to understand ourselves and find our bearings in the journey through life. We want to know the meaning of existence, our duties, our aim and purpose, our relation to the rest of the world, guidance in temptation and com-



fort in vicissitudes. Life is fleeting and a proper comprehension of its significance will be possible only if we view it from the standpoint of the eternal which constitutes the permanent background of its phenomena, the enduring and everlasting in the world of restless change.

Paganism has been superseded by Christianity; and yet Christianity is simply the historical outcome of pre-Christian paganism, chastened by Jewish monotheism and focused in a new sympathetic form. The old problems are repeated and the answer is made in the selfsame spirit.

An early form of Christianity was asceticism based upon a dualistic conception of the soul. Asceticism has been rejected by protestantism which since the time of the Reformation has been the faith of the most progressive nations. It is more than probable that the interpretation of protestantism will also have to be modified, but religion will surely remain.

With better and more exact knowledge we shall need a new interpretation of our faith, but the new interpretation will be as much the result of historical development as the present is the outcome of the past. The religion of the future will be in spirit the same as the religion of the past. Indeed, if we take mankind as a whole we can say that the religion of the future will be this selfsame religion of the past with such corrections or alterations as the present will have to add thereto.

Religion is an inalienable part of man's nature. It may be changed but it will never disappear, and the changes that take place at present, being due to a clearer comprehension of truth, should cause no fear, for the truth can not be wrong; whatever the truth may be, let the truth prevail.

We close with a quotation from the apocryphal book of Esdras (1 Esdras iv. 38), a passage which would have deserved a place in the canon. It reads:

“As for the truth, it endureth, and is always strong; it liveth and conquereth for evermore. With her there is no accepting of persons or rewards; but she doeth the things that are just, and refraineth from all unjust and wicked things; and all men do well like of her works. Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of Truth!”

## APPENDIX.

WE present here to our readers the controversy which, as stated in the introductory pages of this volume, was the occasion of the present investigation of the Samson story. It appeared partly in *The Open Court*, partly in *The Monist*, and consists of two communications by Mr. George W. Shaw, of Geneseo, Illinois, and one editorial reply by the author of this book.

### MYTHOPŒIC ERUDITION.

BY GEO. W. SHAW.

There is a tendency in some minds to resolve history into myth. Those who indulge it are not half educated visionaries, but generally serious thinkers and sometimes profoundly learned. In the crucibles of their analysis strange compounds appear. Homer ceases to exist, and is replaced by a cycle of rhapsodists. The Trojan war becomes a solar myth. William Tell did not fight at Morgarten. Stout old Judge Samson was not a Jewish Shophet, but the sun—his hair, the sunbeams.

"All is illusion: naught is truth."

A small etymological peg will suspend one theory.\* Some myth of a former age or remote race may furnish an analogy confirmatory of another. Having by their methods resolved the facts of history into myths, these savants are at once confronted with the question how such myths originated. Having no direct evidence of facts which probably never occurred, but are confidently assumed, they are left to conjecture their causes. Imaginations vary, and each inquirer is free to elaborate his own hypothesis.

"Raw Americans and fanatical women" may participate in such

\* שמשון connects with שמש. Was not Samson strong like Hercules? Was not Hercules identical with the Phœnician Baal? Ergo, Samson was a solar man, i. e., the sun. Saltatory logic indeed! but who can prevent men from arguing thus if they choose?

controversies, but do not begin them. They originate in the minds of scholars and professors.

The most amusing display of futile erudition witnessed by the nineteenth century was the attempt to class the Trojan war among solar myths. It had for its champion no less a scholar than Max Müller. Nor was the idea relinquished even after Schliemann had brought out the valuables of Priam's Treasury, and shown the five scathed walls of his citadel.

Wolff's theory of the authorship of Homer was supported by an amount of learning rarely surpassed. There is a reason for these follies of the wise. Those who commit them apply impracticable rules of evidence at first and end in a maze of conjectures. For example let the rule be adopted (as it sometimes is), that no fact is to be accepted unless attested by an observer. Facts of recent occurrence can often be thus shown, and such proof is of the highest order. After the lapse of a generation such evidence is unattainable, but the written statements of an observer may remain. A few generations more, and these have disappeared, but quotations from them may remain. A time comes at last when a fact can neither be shown by a contemporary author, nor from one who has ever seen a quotation from a contemporary. Let the fact be then considered as unattested and unworthy of serving as a basis of any conclusion. It still appears, however, that men have believed in that fact. Why did they believe? The natural conclusion that they believed in the fact because it was a fact being rejected, and a more satisfactory explanation demanded, any conjectural explanation may be preserved. The methods adopted are parallel with those of the Greek authors who sought to account for the stories of gods and heroes. There was the historical theory of Euemerus: the gods were men and women. The allegorical method was favored by Plato and the Neo-Platonists: the gods were human qualities personified.

There was also the elemental theory of Heraclides: the gods were elements or heavenly bodies.

Our modern mythopœic academicians incline at present to the latter theory. The solar myth is a favorite recourse. Great men have to encounter enmities and opposition. Comparison of such a man with the sun struggling with thick clouds, now bursting forth in brightness and anon setting in gloom presents an allegory too obvious to be ignored. The metaphor hardens into a theory; the theory into asserted fact. A similar process resulting in the production of another supposed myth gives the professor of the "sci-



ence" of comparative mythology an opportunity of discoursing on the general prevalence of such myths. Some day Washington at Valley Forge may furnish fine material for a sun myth. It is an old remark that unreasonable skepticism leads to absurd credulity.

I do not object to wholesome reserve and strict scrutiny of historical evidence. I only emphasize the necessity of investigation unfettered by artificial canons, and ready to avail itself of any source of truth without disdain of hearsay or tradition. Who has not seen courts of law so restrained by rules of evidence as to be unable to ascertain material facts practically known by all present? A long credited and not impossible occurrence is not to be regarded as mythical or doubtful because we do not know the evidence on which it has been believed. There may have been abundant evidence now inaccessible.

There are myths partly probable and partly improbable; others which consist wholly of the supernatural and improbable.

The former may have a substratum of fact; but the difficulty of separating the real from the imaginary should compel us to relinquish conjecture and insist on evidence. The latter may embody important truths deeply disguised. We are not to despair even of these, but to look for light in every direction. The myth of Belus as it appears in Diodorus, is an illustration.

Belus was a son of Zeus and Lybia. He led a colony from Egypt. He was the first king of Babylon, and entertained Zeus there. His name was that by which the Babylonians called Zeus. He was buried in Babylon, and the Persians destroyed his tomb which the Chaldeans exhorted Alexander to rebuild.

Can any myth be more inconsistent and absurd? And yet it contains much latent truth.

Hammurabi, the first powerful king of Babylon, built a great temple to Bel. The temples of the old Chaldean gods were regarded as their tombs. (See Hilprecht, *Babylonia*, p. 459 ff.) The temple had been wholly or partially destroyed by the Persians, and the Babylonians were anxious for its restoration.

Perhaps much more lies concealed in this myth, and may some day come to light.

Myths are shattered fragments of history illumined by the moonlight of fancy; but we praise not those ancient or modern, erudite or illiterate, who reduce history to ruins, though gleams of sunshine may disclose the former outline.

From *The Open Court*, XVIII (Nov. 1904), p. 687.

## HOW HISTORY IS TRANSFIGURED BY MYTH.

REPLY BY THE AUTHOR.

Mr. George W. Shaw's article "Mythopœic Erudition" characterizes the tendency of modern criticism to resolve legendary traditions and poems into myth, as a mental disease of scholarly minds, as "follies of the wise," and I take pleasure in publishing it because it is thoroughly opposed to my own views, for I, too, belong to the class of people censured by Mr. Shaw for believing that Homer did not exist and is to be "replaced by a cycle of rhapsodists; the Trojan war is a solar myth; William Tell did not fight at Morgarten; stout old Judge Samson was not a Jewish Shophet, but the sun,—his hair, the sunbeams." My motive in publishing Mr. Shaw's communication is not merely for the sake of the principle *audiat et altera pars*, but mainly because it contains a germ of truth which is not always, but frequently, overlooked by scholars of critical tendencies.

When Mr. Shaw characterizes the trend of modern analysis of history by the device, "All is illusion: naught is truth," he is mistaken, at least so far as the leading scholars in the domain of higher criticism are concerned. Traditions, be they ever so mythological, if they are genuine are much more conservative than they may appear at first sight. Though the Trojan war may be a tangle of legends reflecting the solar myth, the Homeric narrative is after all based on actual occurrences. Though William Tell never existed in Switzerland, there must have existed many William Tells, not only in Switzerland but all over the world. Though the Biblical account of Samson's deeds, like the twelve labors of Heracles, is the echo of an ancient solar epic which glorifies the deeds of Shamash in his migrations through the twelve signs of the zodiac, there may have been a Hebrew hero whose deeds reminded the Israelites of Shamash, and so his adventures were told with modifications which naturally made the solar legends cluster about his personality.

A critical investigation into history teaches us that the actual facts are more saturated with mythology than we are aware.

Some time ago we republished in *The Open Court*\* an ingenious satire of M. Pérès, who proposed the proof that Napoleon the Great did not exist but was simply a solar myth, and M. Pérès's style is a clever imitation of the arguments employed by the higher critics

\* "M. Pérès's Proof of the Non-Existence of Napoleon," July, 1903. It has been incorporated in full in H. R. Evans's little book *The Napoleon Myth*, Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1905.

under whose able investigation many historical figures are seen to be centers for mythical accretions.

Although the ancient traditions of Rome, of Greece, and also of Israel, are filled with legend, it is remarkable how much of actual fact is recorded in them.

Biblical traditions have in one sense been fully verified by the Babylonian excavations. They show that occurrences such as are recorded in them actually took place, but the statements in the several books of the Old Testament are not simply narratives of the facts but stories of events as they appeared to the children of Israel at the time when they were written. They are onesided and are not historical in a strict sense of the word; they are historical only in so far as they are echoes of actual events, the narrative being modified by beliefs of their authors.

The same is true of Troy and Homer. The word Homer means "arranger" or "compiler," and any one who is familiar with the Homeric epics, knows that the several songs are not written by the same hand. They are two great compilations and we must assume that the ancient rhapsodists selected with preference themes more or less closely related to the Siege of Troy and the adventures of Odysseus. They may have composed other songs which are now lost, but when at the time of Pisistratus the Homeric rhapsodies were redacted into two great epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the most obvious discrepancies were removed while all those materials that did not fall in with the general plan were doomed to oblivion. Now it is strange that the excavations of Schliemann seem to verify the Homeric stories, for Schliemann discovered ancient ornaments and weapons such as are described in Homer, and believers in the letter of Homer rejoiced at the fact and declared triumphantly that, after all, Homer must be believed in; but, unfortunately for these enthusiasts, Schliemann's excavations prove too much, for he excavated not only one city of Troy, but several cities which are built one upon the top of the other, proving that the siege of Troy and the conquest and burning of the city, had not taken place once but several times; and so we see that history must have repeated itself, and the mythology that overlies the tradition of one tale may have suited all others of the same kind. If a myth embodies a general truth, the myth will find verification in history whenever events of the same kind happen, not once but repeatedly, for the myth stands for the type and the type is realized in every concrete instance.

Events repeat themselves, and these very repetitions are mostly

incorporated in myths. As wild animals use the same trick in catching their prey, and these victims try the same methods of dodging their enemies, so men, being endowed with a definite psychological organism, will naturally act in a typical way. Under similar conditions their sentiments, their words, their actions will be similar. We read, for instance, in the reports of the Revolutionary War that Nathan Hale exclaimed when led to execution: "What a pity that I have only one life to sacrifice for my country!" With a similar enthusiasm Katte, a companion of Prince Frederick of Prussia (later on called "the Great") cried at the moment of execution which he suffered for the sake of his royal friend, "And if I had a thousand lives I would gladly give them up for you!" The same sentiment ensouled the Japanese hero Masashigé, when he declared at the moment of death, "I pray that I may be born seven times to die for my imperial house"; and he found a follower in Commander Hirose whose last poem written shortly before he died a hero's death, begins with the line,

"Yea, seven lives for my loved land."

These coincidences are natural and can easily be multiplied. We read, for instance, in an article by Gen. M. M. Trumbull on "The Value of Doubt in the Study of History" (*The Open Court*, 1888, I, 716):

"Some time ago there was a noted Indian chief in the Western country, by the name of Spotted Tail—he is now, fortunately, in the happy hunting grounds—who was engaged in controversy with the United States Government, about his reservation, or rations, or something; and the Secretary of the Interior sent word to him to come to Washington, and present his complaint in person. To this invitation the noble son of the forest replied, that if he needed something of the Secretary he would go to him; if the Secretary wished anything of him, let him come to him. Cæsar tells us in his *Commentaries*, that on a certain occasion he sent to Ariovistus, King of the Germans, and requested an interview with him. Ariovistus returned this answer, "Si quid ipsi a Cæsare opus esset, sese ad eum venturum fuisse; si quid ille se velit, illum ad se venire oportere," which is the very same answer that Spotted Tail sent to the Secretary of the Interior. A newspaper critic in New York thereupon accused Spotted Tail of plagiarizing from the speech of Ariovistus."

While typical instances occur independently in the same way,



we know also that if an example is once set others will imitate it, and so it will be repeated, as was the case with commander Hirosé, who followed Masashigé. A striking instance of how a religious idea as incorporated in a myth will influence the action of real men is referred to on page 137 in the present book of *The Story of Samson*, in the case of Hamilcar who sacrifices his life as a holocaust because his god Baal had done the same, and even if a hero does not imitate his tutelary gods the people will attribute to him deeds of his god.

A little psychological insight into the constitution of the human mind will best explain the situation. Every occurrence which we experience is at once co-related to and associated with former experiences and both are so fused that an unsophisticated person can not easily separate the facts from the opinions which we hold as to their nature. Thus myth creeps into history and miracles are common events to those who believe in the miraculous.

When Napoleon rose into power his heroic dash and his quick success dazzled the minds of his countrymen, and he was naturally compared now to Alexander the Great, now to Cæsar, or even to the gods. The fate of former conquerors became, as it were, a prophecy for his career. He himself was induced to imitate his predecessors, and his admirers did not hesitate to see him in the light of a mythical hero. Thus it was but an inevitable result that many incidents were attributed to him simply because they belong to the same type of heroes, mythical as well as historical, with whom he had been classified.

Troy was situated in the north-western corner of Asia Minor in a place favorable in the old times for the development of a large city. It offered excellent opportunities for the exchange of goods that came from both the East and the West,—from the interior of Asia and from Europe. The coast was hospitable for such ships as were built in those days, but the advantages were counterbalanced by the disadvantages which exposed the city to hostile attacks, and so the place became unsafe on account of its wealth, proving an attraction to pirates. Homer tells us the history of the capture of Troy not as it really happened, but as it lived in the memory of the Greek nation between the ninth and fifth centuries B. C. It seems a hopeless task to extract from the *Iliad* the historical facts that underlie the story which in spite of its historical background is a tangle of myth and legend. There can be no doubt about it that Helen is a humanized form of *Selene*, the moon; but for all that, some mortal

woman named Helen may have been the cause of a war between Greece and Troy! Odysseus is the sun in his migration, who encounters innumerable adventures and descends into the underworld, whence he returns unscathed to the domain of the living; yet there may have lived an adventurous chief of Ithaca, named Odysseus, who roamed all over the world and came home after an absence of twenty years, an unknown beggar.

It is not uncommon that the same divinity becomes differentiated in the course of time in the different rôles which he assumes and the different ways in which he is represented. Thus the same festival of the dying and resurrected god translated into Christian life becomes in church ritual an Easter mass; in church customs, the mystery play; and in popular life, the carnival with its rollicking spirit. Their common origin is scarcely recognizable when we see these three differentiated forms which they have assumed in the course of time. Shamash has become the god of justice and also the roaming adventurer. We here reproduce the two best known monuments in which Shamash is worthily represented by Babylonian artists. Though Izdubar as well as Heracles, Samson, and kindred figures are different in character from the dignified god of justice, we know, after all, that both conceptions, the sun-god as judge and the sun-god as a wandering hero have been differentiated from one and the same divinity.

As to Tell, we have to state that no family of that name can be traced in Switzerland at or before the time of the Swiss struggle for independence, and the story of Tell's famous shot at the apple on the head of his child is mentioned for the first time in a chronicle written in 1470, i. e., about two centuries after the alleged occurrence.\* But while there is no foundation in Swiss history for the tale of Tell, we are familiar with similar stories among the Norse, the Danes, and the Saxons.† We can scarcely doubt that the legend is a last reminiscence of human sacrifices which, with the progress of civilization, were gradually abolished, and one form in which the abolition of human sacrifices was effected consisted in a ritual ac-

\* In the so-called *Weisse Buch* of the Archives of Obwalden, 1470; and in the *Chronik* of Melchior Russ, 1482. There is further a Tell-ballad, and finally in Tschudi's *Chronicon Helveticum*, from which latter the story was utilized by Schiller in his famous drama.

† Saxo Grammaticus tells the Tell story of "Toko," the Edda of "Egil," and an old English ballad of "William of Cloudeslay." It would lead me too far to exhaust the subject, but a traveler's report even of distant Arabia gives us information of a custom in which a person is offered as a sacrifice, until a skilled marksman liberates the victim after the fashion of Tell's shot.



SHAMASH, THE SUN-GOD, ENTHRONED IN HIS HOLY OF HOLIES. 550



cording to which the victim was consecrated to death but was given a chance of escape through the heroism or skill of a voluntary saviour.



HAMMURABI BEFORE SHAMASH, THE GOD OF LAW.

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While we positively know that Tell is not an ancient Swiss name we may boldly say that the stories of Tell did not, but *might* as well have happened as not, for history repeats itself and wherever



there is oppression, there we meet with characters such as Tell, who oppose a tyrant's violence.

Although the personality of Tell is an invention, Tell is not pure fancy, for in the character of the hero the spirit of independence which animated the Swiss found an appropriate and true personification; but the myth-making instinct of man is very strong and sometimes invents legends where there is not the slightest reason for their existence. As an instance of this I will relate the following story which if not reliable in all its details is at least *ben trovato*.

A New England farmer of colonial days once found in a quarry situated on his land a peculiarly beautiful stone of pyramidal shape, and following an artistic instinct put it up at the crossroad in front of his gate. But he soon regretted it when he was inconvenienced the whole day by people who stopped at the house and asked in whose honor the monument had been erected. The first enquirers were treated politely and with a laugh. But when every wagon that passed by stopped and he had to answer the same question over and over again he became enraged and at last went out to the crossroads and wrote in large letters on the stone the answer to every enquiry, "Nothing particular lies under this stone." He hoped this would stop all further annoyance but he had only poured oil on the fire, for the local newspaper published a short item in one of its issues that Mr. N N, whose farm was situated at the crossroads, had appropriately set up a monument to the famous old chieftain Nothing Particular. Upon further inquiry the same paper was found to contain more information concerning this valiant chief. Among other interesting details it explained that the hero's Indian name was not known, but he was called Nothing Particular by the settlers because of an interesting incident. It seems that he passed a farm one day and found the maid carrying milk in a covered pail. Being hungry and thirsty he asked what she carried there, and she answered, "Nothing particular." Having refreshed himself on the milk he habitually asked at the farms for "nothing particular" and so was soon known by this peculiar name.

Our farmer was now more overwhelmed with questions than ever. Whole parties came from distant counties to see the tomb of Nothing Particular, and the innocent originator of this Indian legend was now so embittered that he broke the stone and threw it back into the quarry from which it had been taken. The condemnation of the population was general, and the incident closed with an

article that appeared in the local Gazette under the caption "An Act of Vandalism."

The incident was closed for our farmer but not for history, for a century afterward a poetical student and a collector of folklore legends when looking over the old files of newspapers, happened to come across the little article written in condemnation of the vandalism of our farmer. He went to the spot, found the stone, made a report to a little circle of his friends, founded a folklore society, collected money for the restoration of ancient monuments, and had the stone replaced at the crossroads where it had been a hundred years before. There the monument still stands, at least so I am told.

While legends may be woven of the flimsiest stuff we must beware lest we condemn the story of an extraordinary event simply because it seems to reflect mythical incidents. Life is cast in definite molds determined by the eternal laws of the universe as well as the psychic constitution of mankind. We will select a most striking instance from contemporary history. Mr. Moncure D. Conway in discussing the situation in France with reference to the Dreyfus trial, is struck with its many features which might indicate a symbolical meaning, and so he writes not without an irony which will undoubtedly be appreciated by Mr. Shaw:\*

"Were the Dreyfus story translated from a newly-found papyrus I might at this moment be writing an essay to prove it a sun-and-storm myth. The Mithraic three-footed Sun (Drei-fus†), obscured by the Eastern Haze (Ester-hazy), and held in prison by the Ahrimanic 'two-footed serpent of lies' (Du Paty=deux pattés), on the Devil's Island, [situated in the distant west], is liberated at cock-crow (Galli-fête) on the eve of the autumnal equinox. What could be clearer? Of course I should merely smile at any scholars credulous enough to suppose that anything so impossible as the Dreyfus case could actually occur."

Mankind will always interpret the facts of life in the light of their convictions and beliefs. Wherever a great personality rises into prominence stories will be told of him which may have happened to characters of the same type of bygone ages. This is the reason why the same anecdotes are told of Cæsar, of Charlemagne, of Frederick the Great, and of Grant, and they will be told of great generals of the ages to come.

\* See Mr. Conway's article "The Idol and the Ideal of the French Republic," *The Open Court*, 1900, Vol. XIV, pp. 13-14.

† The tripod of Pythia in Delphi is sacred to Apollo.

In our religious literature we find the same mixture of fact and fancy. There is more historical truth in the history of Buddha, of Jesus, and of Muhammed than may appear at first sight, judging from the miraculous adornments of all religious tradition. As ivy quickly covers an old tree, the mythological accretions almost conceal the real facts of the lives of religious leaders. We can be sure that Jesus, Gautama Siddhartha, and Mohammed were real persons, but the people who look upon them in faith co-relate the acts related of them with their highest religious ideals of the Christ, the Buddha, and of the Prophet. The Christian Gospels are not simply narratives of the life of Jesus but they are the story of Jesus as the Christ, embodying ancient traditions not only of the Jewish notion of a Messiah but many other kindred hopes; they echo the expectations of the people who were prepared for the coming of a Saviour. The Christ ideal existed before Jesus. The Jewish Messiah conception had been modified and deepened by the Persian doctrine of Mithra, the virgin-born viceroy of God's kingdom on earth, the Babylonian Marduk, the Conqueror of Death and mediator between God the Father, and men, and also the world-resigning Buddha of India. When Jesus was accepted by His disciples as the Messiah, the Christ, all the most important notions and honors of previous kindred figures in the domain of both history and mythology were transferred upon and attributed to the great Galilean.

The picture of Jesus in the New Testament is not strictly historical, but it contains historical facts. It is the story of Jesus, the Nazarene, as interpreted by those who believed that he was the Christ.

P. C.

From *The Open Court*, XVIII (Nov., 1904,) p. 690, with additions.

### SHEMESH AND SAMSON.

BY GEO. W. SHAW.

History may be, and often is, accompanied by myths. The object of the historian who aims at truth is to free facts from their mythical associates. This process is analytic.

Myths are seldom unassociated with history. To determine how much of a story, mainly mythical, is true, is a process of a more synthetic character. It produces new truth which lay hidden in rubbish of error, and even finds value in the rubbish.

The first process is destructive, and, unless conducted with the utmost care, may lead to negation of facts. The second process is constructive, but unless wisely carried on leads to the formation of rash theories. Both these methods are applied to ancient history. The first and easiest has had its day of prevalence: The second and higher should succeed it. If I rightly apprehend the drift of archæological thought, thinkers are becoming more anxious to find history in myths, than to detect myths in history.

In the kind notice of my article on mythopœic erudition which the Editor has inserted, I think I see more evidence of the first method of thought than of the second.

I am far from denying the important part which myths play in Trojan or Hebrew history. The godlike heroes of the Iliad, if shown in historical costume, would not excite our wonder. They are scarcely more exaggerated, however, than Godfrey and his knights in the immortal poem of Tasso; and I can see no more reason to doubt the Siege of Troy than that of Jerusalem; or that the world's unrivaled poet gave a correct outline of facts occurring on the shores of the Hellespont.

I will not, however, enter here into a vindication of the personality of Homer or the unity of his poems, or of the truth of the tradition of Tell. I believe scholars are returning to their allegiance to both Homer and Tell.

But I will discuss for a moment the view of the Editor as to "Judge Samson," for the double reason that I believe it to be the prevalent opinion of scholars, and am confident that it is erroneous. That view is thus expressed:

"Though the Bible account of Samson's deeds, like the twelve labors of Hercules, is the echo of an ancient solar epic which glorifies the deeds of Shamash, in his migrations through the twelve signs of the zodiac, there may have been a Hebrew hero, whose deeds reminded the Israelites of Shamash, and so his adventures were told with such modifications which naturally made the solar legends cluster about his personality."

I contend that there not only may have been, but actually was, a magistrate of that name, and that neither his name, nor character, nor deeds, had any connection with the Babylonian Shamash, or any tendency to remind any one of him. Samson's appearance in the list of Shophets is *prima facie* evidence of his existence as a man. The verb *shamash*, "to serve," only occurs once in the Bible. In Dan. vii. 10 it is met with in the Pihel or intensive form, denoting vig-



orous or persistent service. The segholate noun *shemesh* derived from this form denotes a powerful and unwearied servant, and its derivative *shimshon* would naturally mean powerful. This meaning is especially attested by Josephus. That great master of both Hebrew and Greek translated the word by *ἰσχυρός*, a word connected with *ἰσχω*, and old form of *ἐχω*, and denoting a vigor that holds—is enduring. The adjective probably refers to the vigor of a stout serving man. It is analogous to the English “burley”=“boorlike.”

Gesenius failed to perceive the logical sequence of ideas, and pronounced the translation of Josephus “*ohne sprachlichen Anhalt.*” This flippant remark of a learned professor has been too successful in introducing error into Hebrew lexicons, where Samson appears as a solar man.

Relying on the much higher authority of Josephus, I say that he was not a solar man at all but simply a strong man.

Other Hebrews of that time received their names, or rather titles, from their qualities or actions—Gideon was the slasher, the *sabrieur*—Deborah the queen bee—Barak lightning—Jephthah the deliverer—Samson the strong.

Turn we now to the Chaldean god Samas; or as he is named in the Bible, Shemesh. He was once a newer and inferior deity. He was the son (perhaps the daughter) of the moon-god Sin—a confirmation of Bachofen’s contention that the worship of the moon is older than that of the sun. He was a servant. In an old Accadian hymn translated by Lenormant, he is styled the servant of Anu and Bel. The word “servant” applied to the god came to designate the sun itself. Shemesh grew in importance. Great temples were built to him at Larsa and Sippara. The former was seven hundred years old in the time of Hammurabi, and was renewed by that king. The representation of him found there by Rassam shows a venerable sovereign with a long beard and a solar disk before him, in front of which stand several worshipers. He became the god of legislation and jurisprudence. In Hammurabi’s time judges sat in his temple, and their decrees were recorded. Hammurabi himself is represented as receiving from him the stone tablet on which is inscribed the great code.

Shemesh is styled in some inscriptions the “Judge of Heaven and Earth,” the “Ruler of the World,” the “Greatest of the Gods.”

He mingles the attributes of two Greek deities who, though generally clearly distinguished, were sometimes confounded—Helios and Apollo. Like Helios his name was identical with that of the

sun. Like him he opened the door of the shining heavens, and traversed the upper and lower worlds.

But he resembles Apollo more. Apollo, like him, was a servant, but became a god of legislation, and gave the sanction of his oracle to the laws of Lycurgus. Apollo rose in the Hellenic mind to a position almost equal to that of Zeus himself. Shemesh lacked the celestial beauty and grace of the god of literature, of music, and of song, but appears in the more imposing attitude of the judge of all mankind, rewarding virtue and punishing vice.

Apollo was not without that function, but it was not so prominent as in the case of Shemesh.

What is there in the character or acts of Samson to call to mind the great and venerable god of truth and justice? He was a shophet or regulator, and his duties embraced those of a judicial character with other duties. In this he did not differ from the other shophets, nor is there any indication that he excelled any other person of his class in any department of his duty. His prominent characteristic was his prodigious strength. As Shere Afghan encountered and slew bare-handed a royal Bengal tiger, so he could rend a lion. As Wallace stalked through bands of English soldiery, striking down a man at every blow, so he could pierce a hostile array of Philistines; but he shows no sign of superior intelligence. His main trait was an irresistible *penchant* for the daughters of the Philistines. He was simply a stout, sensual man, with some humor and shrewdness, but of small mental calibre.

To a worshiper of Shemesh it would have seemed gross impiety to compare such a man with the great god of truth and justice. A Jew admiring a hero would not have compared him to a heathen divinity.

It has been suggested that near the scene of Samson's career was Beth Shemesh, a name denoting the site of a sanctuary of the god. However that may have been, the worship of Shemesh had ceased there in the time of the Judges, for we find the Bethshemites receiving the ark with joy and sacrifices on its return from captivity. (1 Sam. vi. 13.)

That mythical elements and exaggeration occur in the story of Samson is not denied.

It contains a striking instance of the superstition, wide spread among primitive men, that your enemy acquires a fatal influence over you by obtaining some of your hair. Samson's power of resistance vanishes when he is shorn.

The mythical and exaggerated portions of the narrative, however, bear no impress of solarism nor of Shemesh, who had ceased to be a mere sun-god and become, like Apollo, a distinct person, many centuries before the period of the Judges.

We have in Samson an historical man—a valiant though unwise and unsuccessful champion of his people.

From *The Monist*, Jan., 1907.





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# Plant Breeding

Comments on the experiments of  
BURBANK & NILSSON. By

Hugo DeVries, Professor of Botany in the University of Amsterdam.

Pages, XIII + 351. 114 Illustrations. Printed on fine enamel paper. Cloth, gilt top, \$1.50 net; \$1.70 postpaid. (7s. 6d. net.)



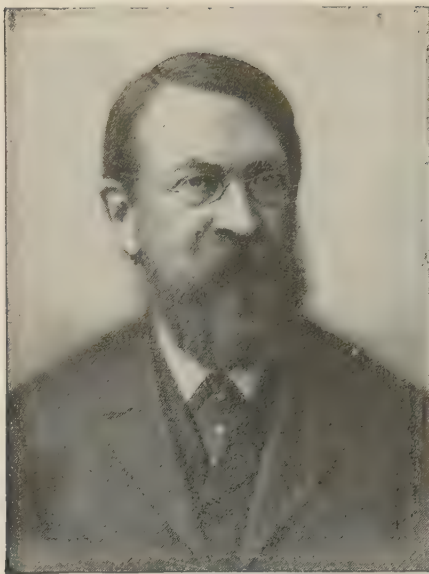
Under the influence of the work of Nilsson, Burbank, and others, the principle of selection has, of late, changed its meaning in practice in the same sense in which it is changing its significance in science by the adoption of the theory of an origin of species by means of sudden mutations. The method of slow improvement of agricultural varieties by repeated selection is losing its reliability and is being supplanted by the discovery of the high practical value of the elementary species, which may be isolated by a single choice. The appreciation of this principle will, no doubt, soon change the whole aspect of agricultural plant breeding.

Hybridization is the scientific and arbitrary combination of definite characters. It does not produce new unit-characters; it is only the combination of such that are new. From this point of view the results of Burbank and others wholly agree with the theory of mutation, which is founded on the principle of the unit-characters.

This far-reaching agreement between science and practice is to become a basis for the further development of practical breeding as well as of the doctrine of evolution. To give proof of this assertion is the main aim of these Essays.

The results of Nilsson have been published only in the Swedish language; those of Burbank have not been described by himself. Prof. DeVries's arguments for the theory of mutation have been embodied in a German book, "Die Mutationstheorie" (2 vols. Leipsic, Vat & Co.), and in lectures given at the University of California in the summer of 1904, published under the title of "Species and Varieties; their Origin by Mutation." A short review of them will be found in the first chapter of these Essays.

Some of them have been made use of in the delivering of lectures at the Universities of California and of Chicago during the summer of 1906 and of addresses before various audiences during my visit to the United States on that occasion. In one of them (H. D.), the main contents have been incorporated in a paper read before the American Philosophical Society at their meeting in honor of the bicentennary of the birth of their founder, Benjamin Franklin, April, 1906.



## **Space and Geometry in the Light of Physiological, Psychological and Physical Inquiry.**

By Dr. Ernst Mach, Emeritus Professor in the University of Vienna. From the German by Thomas J. McCormack, Principal of the LaSalle-Peru Township High School. 1906. Cloth, gilt top. Pp. 143. \$1.00 net. (5s. net.)

In these essays Professor Mach discusses the questions of the nature, origin, and development of our concepts of space from the three points of view of the physiology and psychology of the senses, history, and physics, in all which departments his profound researches have gained for him an authoritative and commanding position. While in most works on the foundations of geometry one point of view only is emphasized—be it that of logic, epistemology, psychology, history, or the formal technology

of the science—here light is shed upon the subject from all points of view combined, and the different sources from which the many divergent forms that the science of space has historically assumed, are thus shown forth with a distinctness and precision that in suggestiveness at least leave little to be desired.

Any reader who possesses a slight knowledge of mathematics may derive from these essays a very adequate idea of the abstruse yet important researches of meta-geometry.

**The Vocation of Man.** By Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Translated by William Smith, LL. D. Reprint Edition. With biographical introduction by E. Ritchie, Ph. D. 1906. Pp. 185. Cloth, 75c net. Paper, 25c; mailed, 31c. (1s. 6d.)

Everyone familiar with the history of German Philosophy recognizes the importance of Fichte's position in its development. His idealism was the best exposition of the logical outcome of Kant's system in one of its principal aspects, while it was also the natural precursor of Hegel's philosophy. But the intrinsic value of Fichte's writings have too often been overlooked. His lofty ethical tone, the keenness of his mental vision and the purity of his style render his works a stimulus and a source of satisfaction to every intelligent reader. Of all his many books, that best adapted to excite an interest in his philosophic thought is the *Vocation of Man*, which contains many of his most fruitful ideas and is an excellent example of the spirit and method of his teaching.

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## Yin Chih Wen, The Tract of the Quiet Way.

With Extracts from the Chinese commentary. Translated by Teitaro Suzuki and Dr. Paul Carus. 1906. Pp. 48. 25c net.

This is a collection of moral injunctions which, among the Chinese is second perhaps only to the *Kan-Ying P'ien* in popularity, and yet so far as is known to the publishers this is the first translation that has been made into any Occidental language. It is now issued as a companion to the *T'ai-Shang Kan-Ying P'ien*, although it does not contain either a facsimile of the text or its verbatim translation. The original consists of the short tract itself which is here presented, of glosses added by commentators, which form a larger part of the book, and finally a number of stories similar to those appended to the *Kan-Ying P'ien*, which last, however, it has not seemed worth while to include in this version. The translator's notes are of value in justifying certain readings and explaining allusions, and the book is provided with an index. The frontispiece, an artistic outline drawing by Shen Chin-Ching, represents *Wen Ch'ang*, one of the highest divinities of China, revealing himself to the author of the tract.

The motive of the tract is that of practical morality. The maxims give definite instructions in regard to details of man's relation to society, besides more general commands of universal ethical significance, such as "Live in concord," "Forgive malice," and "Do not assert with your mouth what your heart denies."

**T'ai-Shang Kan-Ying P'ien,** Treatise of the Exalted One on Response and Retribution. Translated from the Chinese by Teitaro Suzuki and Dr. Paul Carus. Containing Chinese Text, Verbatim Translation, Explanatory Notes and Moral Tales. Edited by Dr. Paul Carus. 16 plates. Pp. 135. 1906. Boards, 75c net.

The book contains a critical and descriptive introduction, and the entire Chinese text in large and distinct characters with the verbatim translation of each page arranged on the opposite page in corresponding vertical columns. This feature makes the book a valuable addition to the number of Chinese-English text-books already available. The text is a facsimile reproduction from a collection of Chinese texts made in Japan by Chinese scribes.

After the Chinese text follows the English translation giving references to the corresponding characters in the Chinese original, as well as to the explanatory notes immediately following the English version. These are very full and explain the significance of allusions in the Treatise and compare different translations of disputed passages. This is the first translation into English directly from the Chinese original, though it was rendered into French by Stanislas Julien, and from his French edition into English by Douglas.

A number of illustrative stories are appended in all the editions of the original, but the selection of these stories seems to vary in the different editions. They are very inferior in intrinsic value to the Treatise itself, and so are represented here only by extracts translated in part directly from the Chinese edition and in part through the French of Julien, but many are illustrated by reproductions of the Chinese pictures from the original edition. The frontispiece is a modern interpretation by Keichyu Yamada of Lao Tze, the great Oriental philosopher, "The Exalted One" to whom the authorship of this Treatise is ascribed.

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**Spinoza and Religion.** A Study of Spinoza's Metaphysics and of his particular utterances in regard to religion, with a view to determining the significance of his thought for religion and incidentally his personal attitude toward it. By Elmer Ellsworth Powell, A. M., Ph. D., Professor of Philosophy in Miami University. 1906. Pp. xi, 344. \$1.50 net. (7s. 6d.)



Spinoza has been regarded for centuries as the most radical philosopher, yet he had a reverential attitude toward religion and prominent thinkers such as Goethe looked up to him as their teacher in both metaphysics and religion. Professor E. E. Powell, of Miami University, feels that there has been great need to have Spinoza's philosophy and attitude toward religion set forth by a competent hand, and, accordingly, he has undertaken the task with a real love of his subject, and has indeed accomplished it with success.





**Aristotle on His Predecessors.** Being the first book of his metaphysics. Translated from the text of Christ, with introduction and notes. By A. E. Taylor, M. A., Fellow of Merton College, Oxford; Frothingham Professor of Philosophy in McGill University, Montreal. Pp. 160. Cloth, 75c net. Paper, 35c postpaid.

This book will be welcome to all teachers of philosophy, for it is a translation made by a competent hand of the most important essay on the history of Greek thought down to Aristotle, written by Aristotle himself. The original served this great master with his unprecedented encyclopedic knowledge as an introduction to his *Metaphysics*; but it is quite apart from the rest of that work, forming an independent essay in itself, and will remain forever the main source of our information on the predecessors of Aristotle.

Considering the importance of the book, it is strange that no translation of it appears to have been made since the publication of that by Bekker in 1831.

The present translation has been made from the latest and most critical Greek text available, the second edition of W. Christ, and pains have been taken not only to reproduce it in readable English, but also to indicate the exact way in which the translator understands every word and clause of the Greek. He has further noted all the important divergencies between the readings of Christ's text and the editions of Zellar and Bonitz, the two chief modern German exponents of Aristotelianism.

Not the least advantage of the present translation is the incorporation of the translator's own work and thought. He has done his best, within the limited space he has allowed himself for explanations, to provide the student with ample means of judging for himself in the light of the most recent researches in Greek philosophical literature, the value of Aristotle's account of previous thought as a piece of historical criticism.

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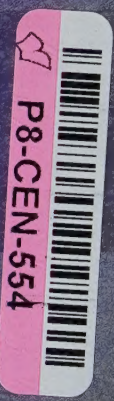
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